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HISTORY OF THE
MENNONITE COMMUNITY OF
HAMBURG AND ALTONA

by

Berend Carl Roosen

Hamburg, Germany, 1886

Translated and edited by

Dorothy Jenson Schimmelpfennig, Ph. D.

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
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Salt Lake City, Utah

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PREFACE

How quickly we forget those generations past who are responsible for our lives and who played a significant part in forming the world we experience. In her declining years, my great grandmother Sarah Clausen Jensen endeavored to remember tales heard in childhood about the religious persecution endured by her German ancestors. "They could only have been Jewish," reasoned Sarah. What other people were there who had been despised and driven from place to place? It came as a shock to our family, therefore, when we learned our forebears were not Jews but Mennonites, and before that Anabaptists.

As with any vital movement, the great Reformation of the sixteenth century had its conservatives and its radical left wing. Lutherans, Calvinists (Reformed Church), and later the Sacramentarian followers of Zwingli worked for reform of the medieval church through compromise with existing social, governmental, and religious institutions. The radical element, on the other hand, eschewed reform and committed themselves to the restitution of apostolic Christianity. These so-called Anabaptists rejected the concepts of both transubstantiation and consubstantiation as applied to the eucharist, they denied the validity of Catholic ordination, and they declared infant baptism ineffectual by submitting to rebaptism as adults.

From our own perspective in history, it is difficult to comprehend the violent persecution suffered by simple people who chose to follow the example of Christ, according to their own interpretation of His ministry. Tortured, maimed, killed, and driven, these despised Christians experienced their own Diaspora, and in a very

literal sense helped make possible the religious freedom we presently enjoy.

The tedious work of translating Roosen's History of the Mennonite Community of Hamburg and Altona was undertaken in recognition of the debt owed these valiant Christians and in appreciation of the unique and priceless heritage they have given me. Among the Anabaptists and Mennonites mentioned in the book, these are my direct ancestors:

Geeritt (Gerhard) Roosen and Mayken Amoury, Coord Roosen, Geerlinck Roosen and Elisabeth van Sintern, Pieter van Sintern, Paul Roosen and Janneken (Hannchen) Quins, Hans and Rinsken Quins, Mayken Quins and Peter Plus, Collart Amoury and Martjen Cochet, Huybert Amoury and N. Hemelscoers, Hans Amoury and Elisabeth Stockman, Samuel Stockman (the elder), François Noë (the elder) and Perina de Mol, Peter Goverts, Godeward Goverts, Willem Goverts, Harmen Goverts, Hans Goverts and Maycken Harmensen, Jacob de Vlieger, Carl de Vlieger and Ester Roosen, and Jan Beets.

Because footnote citations in the book are incomplete, a bibliography has not been prepared. Names of individuals and places are as given in the original work in most instances. When changes have been made, it was to make spellings consistent, to Anglicize geographic designations for better comprehension, or because individuals are internationally well known.

About the author

Berend Carl Roosen was born October 29, 1820, in Hamburg, Germany. He was the second son of a ship owner Hermann Roosen, and a descendant of the founding families of the Mennonite Community in Hamburg and Altona. Prior to his call as pastor of the Hamburg and Altona congregation--a post he would hold for sixty years--young Berend studied theology in Kiel, Berlin, and Heidelberg. He also served a year as an assistant preacher in preparation for his assignment.

During the last decade of his life, Pastor Roosen devoted considerable time to the research and writing of this book and a subsequent, second volume detailing the early history of the Mennonite Community. After a lifetime of faithful service to the Lord, Berend Carl Roosen died December 25, 1904, at the age of 85.

Dorothy Jenson Schimmelpfennig

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February 1974

INTRODUCTION

The author of this historical review, of the early Anabaptist movement in Hamburg and Altona, is a member of the present Mennonite Community in this same area. As a humble servant of the Lord, he fully acknowledges the divine assistance received in the completion of the work. The objective of the review is to present the beliefs and religious commitments of the early Mennonite society, with no attempt to conceal incidents that may be considered derogatory. Through a more perfect knowledge of the true Christian dedication of their forefathers, it is hoped that the faith of the present generation might be awakened and strengthened. With changed attitudes the members of our congregation may gain the fortitude to meet life with renewed vigilance and circumspection befitting those who sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ.

The guiding hand of God is recognized in all the events included in this account. The very existence of the community in Hamburg and Altona today proves a strong testimony toward the cherished belief that the Lord has a purpose and a plan for His people. Only through His mercy was it possible for the Mennonite Community to survive the onslaughts from within and without. It was through serving Him that the early members of the community were able to renew their faith and enjoy the comradery of those who follow the way of Christ.

The author would admonish the present generation not to be ashamed of the faith and dedication of their fathers, for it was through their acts that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ was praised.

Although it was the original intent of the author to confine remarks to the history of the Mennonites in Hamburg and Altona, it soon became apparent that information concerning other communities should be included. Therefore, numerous accounts and comments are to be found within this report that may not immediately be perceived as pertinent to Mennonites in the Hamburg-Altona area. Furthermore, encouragement is extended to the members of these other congregations, such as Cresfeld, Danzig, Emden, Friedrichstadt, Pfalz, and West Prussia, to write historical accounts of their own communities. It is anticipated that careful study of these diverse groups will indicate unique developments caused by their isolation. Instances of unity and mutual effort, as well as differences, among the congregations should be documented. Special attention should be given the structural growth of an ecclesiastical organization. Upon completion of these various historical studies, careful comparisons of parallel developments should be made. The basic work of Dr. Ludwig Keller is highly recommended for those who choose to undertake such a worthwhile research project.¹ With the help of the Lord, this first attempt to record the history of the German Mennonites will provide information previously considered unavailable.

Bolten's History of Churches in Altona, The Hamburg Historical Journal, and Welchmann's History of Altona were research sources for this comprehensive report.

¹The work of Mrs. Kommerzienrat Brons. Ursprung provides an excellent overall view of the history of the Mennonite Community as well as their attitude toward baptism.

CHAPTER I

The Founding of the Community in Hamburg and Altona in the Sixteenth Century

Taufgesinnten² resided in Holstein as early as 1630, and within fifty years of this date could be found in Hamburg. However, those whom we can identify among the inhabitants of Hamburg at this time, and somewhat later in Altona, did not migrate from Holstein but were refugees from the Southern Netherlands. There is no doubt that this surprising fact can be attributed to the severe mandates enforced against the Taufgesinnten in the Netherlands. Altona experienced a similar influx, and by the end of the sixteenth century, refugees from the south swelled the population of this sister city to Hamburg.

Those who elected to stop in Holstein for an indefinite period before proceeding on to Hamburg or Altona may not have enjoyed the prestige of being the very first Taufgesinnten to join the Hamburg Community, but they were certainly among the earliest to arrive. By examining the history of these two founding groups, we Mennonites may be inspired to live closer to our religion and be more willing to give of ourselves to the greater glory of God.

In so far as we can ascertain, the first Taufgesinnten to appear in Hamburg emigrated from the southern provinces of the Netherlands.

²The terms Taufgesinnten and Täufers were originally applied to religious groups concerned with baptism. It was not until sometime during the course of the seventeenth century that the designation 'Mennonites' became generally accepted. In so far as this work is concerned, the three names are interchangeable.

We can pinpoint this movement, with some confidence, to Brabant and Flanders in the region now known as Belgium. The Täufer movement, begun in Switzerland in 1522 and 1523, quickly spread to the Netherlands where converts were gained in spite of persecution from Catholic clergymen and civil administrators. Not only did the movement survive destruction of property and execution of believers, but Taufgesinnten were able to form sizeable communities in the northern provinces. Conditions in the south were more hostile, and Taufgesinnten disappeared from this region prior to the end of the sixteenth century. It is suggested the numerous communities located in the north and in Germany calling themselves Vlamischen or Flemish did so to identify their place of origin. Our own Hamburg and Altona Community retained the Flemish name until the second decade of the seventeenth century, when any one of three designations--Flemish, Frisian, or High German--could identify it.

Taufgesinnten in the southern provinces were bitterly persecuted by Charles V, of the German House of Hapsburg.³ This disreputable monarch occupied the throne of Spain and counted the Netherlands among his domains. To escape the penalties of torture, imprisonment, and death meted out to all dissenters from the Catholic Church, refugees began moving northward, particularly toward Friesland and East Friesland. Segregated communities that have continued to exist up to this time were being founded through the combined efforts of the Flemish and Friesland Taufgesinnten in 1543. Both Friesland groups practiced the simple way of life, wore plain clothing, were scrupulously clean, and were recognized as immaculate housekeepers. The Flemish followed similar practices, but were even more severe in their observance of the simple life and stressed the importance of

³S. Blaup, Cate Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Friesland, pp. 86, 87.

the style of clothing worn by its members. It is a point of interest that those from Southern Flanders were noted for their hot tempers.

Flemish Taufgesinnten who preferred to endure persecution rather than emigrate continued to draw new converts to their way of life as late as 1550. Much credit for the increase in numbers must also be given Leonard Bouwens, who made five dangerous trips to Brabant from the north. Through courageous and zealous efforts, he was able to baptize 253 converts in Antwerp alone. According to Father Cornelius, the community within Bruges (capital city of Flanders) could count more than 700 members in 1568. He claimed further that there were more than 1,000 unbaptized citizens in Bruges due to Anabaptist activity. However, all communities of Taufgesinnten were finally obliterated by the Spanish Duke [Ferdinand] of Alva through the fearful reprisals against those who dared to differ with the Catholic Church.

In August of 1567, King Phillip II of Spain dispatched 10,000 troops to Diedenhofen in Lothringen [Lorraine], under the command of the Iron Duke of Alva. His orders were to subjugate the rebellious southern provinces and prosecute all subjects who proved heretical. Mobs had been smashing religious statues and damaging Catholic convents and churches in violent protest against gruesome methods of suppression carried out by Cardinal Granvella, his successor Vigilius, and Count Barlaimont. Peace had finally been restored through efforts of the House of Orange and members of the Lutheran faith, but too late. The Duke of Alva arrived with his army of enforcement and set up a criminal court--the so-called Council of Altercation. Formal hearings that were to become part of the infamous Inquisition were summarily begun. For more than six years, from August of 1567 to December 15, 1573, Alva and his Spanish troops harassed the Netherlands. By the time of his recall, Alva was able to boast the execution of more than 18,000 accused heretics.

Who can say what the loss of these potentially productive citizens, by death or emigration, has meant to Belgium. Wealthy manufacturers of woolen clothing were among those 100,000 who are said to have fled in a single year. Many of these astute businessmen settled in England, while others took refuge in German towns along the seacoast. A considerable number of this group were Lutherans who opposed dissenters, other than themselves, as strongly as did the Catholics. Only the pressing need for industrious workers in the Hanseatic cities brought about conditions of tolerance and a revocation of the mandates against minority religious movements.

We may assume the Reformed Church contributed to the sudden growth of Altona as much as did the Taufgesinnten because members of both faiths emigrated from the Netherlands to the cities of Hamburg and Stade in 1567. The first refugees from the Netherlands whom we can place in Hamburg by that date are Herman Rodenborch, a weaver from Amsterdam, and his family. In a letter addressed to the Hamburg City Council two years later, Rodenborch testified he fled to Hamburg "because of the tyranny in the Netherlands perpetrated against many devout Christians."⁴ It should be noted that this complaint referred to conditions existing prior to the arrival of Alva in Flanders. A treaty drafted May 5, 1570, on behalf of the citizens of Hamburg indicates members of the Rodenborch family were not the only refugees seeking a haven of tolerance in Germany. According to this document, "Many and all kinds of people from distant and suspicious places have stopped in Hamburg and begun to establish residence. As a result Christian churches and communities are in danger of being corrupted by false doctrine and led astray." Although a few of the displaced persons referred to in the treaty could have come from Holstein, the complaint is lodged primarily

⁴ See the Central Division of the Society for the History of Hamburg.

against those from the Netherlands. Among the Taufgesinnten living directly outside the city gates of Wandsbeck before this time was Jürgen Hermans. Jürgen had been born in Wandsbeck in 1577, a son of Herman Hermans and his Anabaptist wife.

The city of Hamburg offered no guarantee of safety for Netherlanders, especially Taufgesinnten. The six northern cities of Lübeck, Bremen, Rostock, Stralsund, Lüneburg, and Hamburg had imposed a stringent mandate against all Sacramentarians [followers of Ulrich Zwingli] and Anabaptists (Taufgesinnten) in 1535, the year rebellious Wiedertäufers were overthrown in Münster. Proclaimed from the pulpits of Hamburg four times a year, this mandate forbid citizens to house or take into their service or employment any members of the specified sects.⁵ The edict was renewed in 1555 and strengthened in 1560. In 1572, Lutheran clergymen complained to the Hamburg City Council about the heretical beliefs of the refugees from the Netherlands and convinced them orders should be issued requiring the offenders to effect a compromise with the Lutherans. In all probability it was Prince William of Orange, temporarily in residence at Ellenardt, who tempered the decision of the councilmen. Because of this timely intervention, the refugees were not compelled to compromise their religion. Judicial hearings were conducted in Hamburg by the Lutheran superintendent Penshorn in 1575 and subsequent years. Defendants in these actions were those men and women from the Netherlands who did not attend Lutheran services or participate in the Lutheran sacraments [baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, marriage, last rites].⁶ Pressure created by these hearings caused some to accept Lutheran membership, but the majority remained

⁵ F. A. Bolten, Historical Reports of Churches of the City of Altona (Altona, 1790), pp. 270 f.

⁶ Society for the History of Hamburg, Journal, Vol. VI.

firm in their convictions. The hearings appear to have had no further results. It must be acknowledged that throughout the proceedings Penshorn, as well as those who had preceded him in this position, exhibited tolerant attitudes. Their concern appeared to be the personal salvation of each accused rather than the imposition of opposing values through force.

It is remarkable only one man can be identified with the Taufgesinnten among all those whose names were recorded by Dominicus von Uffeln during the hearings. From the testimony of that single individual, Willem de Voss, we learn that he, his wife, and their children lived in Mönkedamm. He further states not one of his family participated in Lutheran sacraments during their entire six years of residence in Mönkedamm. In fact de Voss commented they would rather be papists than Lutherans if forced to make a choice. We can be certain de Voss was not a Catholic at the time for no members of this sect were interrogated. From an examination of the testimony, the archivist Dr. Otto Beneke concludes de Voss was a member of the Taufgesinnten and not the Reformed Church, as were all the other defendants. The Reformed Church held its religious services in Stade, a small city reached by way of the Elbe River. Although the journey on the Elbe was considered difficult in any season, bad weather encountered during the winter months made it particularly dangerous at that time.

We do not know all the circumstances, but the fact many aristocratic and wealthy families were counted among the refugees appears to have had a profound effect upon the citizens of Hamburg and their City Council. Not only were the refugees permitted to remain in Hamburg and its environs, but they were frequently protected. The greater part of the Netherlanders had not intended to remain permanently in Hamburg. Ties with their abandoned homeland continued strong, and hope was ever high that a condition of tolerance

might soon be re-established allowing them to return. For this reason many refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the city-state of Hamburg. [The taking of oaths was prohibited by the tenets of almost all Mennonite communities.] Under the circumstances the Netherlanders were considered temporary residents and immune from the customary head tax. This monetary advantage was bitterly resented by the City Council and the legal citizens of Hamburg. However, the hostile feelings generated through these tax concessions did not prevent the refugees from purchasing real estate and improving their social and economic position.

A ten-year agreement between the Hamburg City Council and the representatives of 130 Netherlander households was signed in 1605 and extended at intervals thereafter. Included in the terms of this contract were the release from oaths of citizenship and exemption from head tax. On the other hand, the Netherlanders were required to pay duty on imports, and those who anticipated sizeable incomes were to be assessed an annual tax based upon their earnings. To guarantee good behavior, the head of each household, including the guardians of widows, was required to pledge "with hand and mouth" their loyalty, cooperation, and obedience. The promise was also exacted that the Netherlanders would not cause disturbances or incite a revolution as long as they remained in Hamburg.

Among the households mentioned in the contract, there were undoubtedly some that had been in Hamburg since 1570. The names of these families could be compared with our earliest membership rolls if these irreplaceable documents had not been taken and lost by the Dompelaars when they separated from the parent community. Because of this unfortunate episode, our oldest extant records begin with the year 1650. Cross matching these documents with the 1605 contract negotiated with the Hamburg City Council, we are able to identify the following men as Taufgesinnten.

(1) Jacob Siemons, assessed 8 thaler, and Hans Siemons, 40 thaler. The name Siemons or Symons belongs to more than one family. A Hans Symons other than the one cited in this instance is mentioned in our earliest records.

(2) Giesbert de Voss, possible son of Willem de Voss, agreed to a payment of 10 thaler.

(3) Samuel Stockman agreed to an assessment of 24 thaler.⁷ Gerhard Roosen's meticulous notes are the main source of information about the founding members of our community. These records state that Samuel Stockman, the elder, was probably born in Antwerp. His first occupation in Hamburg was that of a tailor, his second was a dealer of oil containers, and still later a merchant.

While all three of these families--Symons, de Voss, and Stockman--remained part of our community over a long span of time, only the name of de Voss can be found among our members today.

Some of our founding families were omitted from the contract because they moved to Altona prior to 1605. Members of the Reformed Church also contributed substantially to the growth and development of Altona, having lived in that city since 1580. Members of this sect whose names indicate an origin in the Netherlands are Jürgen van Lohe, Jean de Wael, the two tailors Hans van Güllick and Hinrich van Summen, the shoemaker Jürgen Lambrechts, Berend de Becker, the gluemaker Clauss Andriessen, and a leather tanner by the name of Jan van den Broocke. These eight men sponsored an ordinance establishing a relief fund for the poor and obtained permission to set up a collection box for contributions to maintain the fund. As increasing numbers of skilled workers found refuge in Altona, competition between these artisans and those native to Hamburg became

⁷ The Stockman family originally spelled their name with one 'n', as is the custom in the Netherlands. Succeeding generations added the second consonant.

increasingly keen. To guarantee employment for its own labor force, in 1594 the Hamburg City Council forbade citizens to hire craftsmen from Altona. In 1603, Hamburg citizens were forbidden to attend religious services in Altona, especially those conducted by the Reformed Church.⁸

The Noë and Quins families, which play such an important part in this historical account, emigrated from the southern provinces of the Netherlands to Hamburg, and later Altona. Thanks to the notes of Gerhard Roosen, we know more concerning these two families than any others. François Noë joined the Taufgesinnten in Antwerp, where he had been born and reared. When the full force of the Inquisition struck Flanders, François, his wife Pereira [sic] de Mol, their children, and a brother-in-law Pieter de Mol fled to Hamburg. François maintained residence in Hamburg until his death. His son and namesake, François Noë II, married the young widow of Jan Harmen and pursued a business in plush velvet.⁹

Through commercial contacts François II became acquainted with Count Ernst von Schauenburg, hereditary ruler of Altona and the Province of Pinneberg. Impressed with his ability and moral character, the Count appointed François II as his agent in Hamburg. It was because of this close association with the Count that François Noë II was able to gain concessions previously denied religious minorities in Altona. In 1601, Jews as well as members of the Reformed Church, the Flemish Community, and the Catholic Church were granted permission to live in Altona. They were also given the right to conduct business and hold religious services without interference. The

⁸Wichmann, Journal for Hamburg History (1883), "History of Altona," p. 31.

⁹Not only is François' name recorded on the occasion of his marriage, but his standing in regards to members of other religious persuasions is also given.

first place of residence for François II and his family was on the Grosse Freiheit Street, where church buildings have since been erected. From there the family moved to the corner of Bleichen [Bleaching] and Rosen [Roses] Streets. After the death of François Noë II, those who attempted to replace him failed to maintain his high standards and lost not only the coveted position but their investments as well. It should be noted that neither the Grosse Freiheit Street [Great Freedom Street] nor the Kleine Freiheit Street [Small Freedom Street] received its name because of religious freedom enjoyed there. At a much earlier period, noblemen from the House of Schauenburg designated this tract as free pasturage for the livestock owned by local residents. The privilege was reaffirmed by Count Ernst von Schauenburg, and extended in 1622 and 1635 by those who succeeded him. Forty years later, after the death of the last male heir to the Schauenburg line, the estate reverted to King Christian IV of Denmark. Although he, too, continued the grant, the right to free use of the land was withdrawn during the decades that followed his reign.

A family of Taufgesinnten by the name of Quins may have arrived in Altona at an even earlier date than did the Noë family. Hans Quins and his wife Rinsken emigrated from the southern provinces of the Netherlands. It is assumed Hans was native to Diest, located in the northeast section of Brabant, because Gerhard Roosen reported there were still many families by the name of Quins living in and around the area a hundred years later. Hans had a home in Reimers Alley in Hamburg and manufactured knives, swords, and other kinds of cutlery. On August 3, 1597, at the age of 40, he died of plague and was buried before the tower of Catherine Cemetery. Because our informant Gerhard Roosen was the grandson of Hans Quins, most of the details concerning the Quins family are considered correct. However, the statement that Hans Quins fled from Brabant

with his wife during the time the Duke of Alva was there must be erroneous. Alva was in the Netherlands between the years 1567 and 1573, a date too early for the marriage of Hans and Rinsken. That their flight did take place is not in doubt for Gerhard was well acquainted with his grandmother Rinsken who lived until Gerhard's fourteenth year.

Rinsken Quins was not only devout, she was ambitious. After the untimely death of her husband, Hans, she opened a little shop on the Trost Bridge in Hamburg. Catering to the needs of the common resident as well as the businessmen of Hamburg, Rinsken sold a variety of useful items including knives, combs, seals, and scales for weighing gold. Her enterprise was so successful that local shopkeepers lodged a complaint against the widow on the basis that privileges to sell such goods were to be granted to full citizens and guild members only. Forced out of business in Hamburg, Rinsken immediately began producing decorative fringe in the more tolerant atmosphere of Altona. To make this fringe, Rinsken carefully strung gold-plated lead beads and attached the completed strands to a supporting material. Tedious as the task was, the income from the sale of this delicate merchandise enabled Rinsken to provide for herself and four daughters. When the time came for the girls to select husbands, each married a staunch member of the Taufgesinnten. Mayken, the eldest, married a tanner and furrier by the name of Peter Plus, who conducted a brisk trade with Russia. The second daughter, Janneken, married Paul Roosen. Janneken and Paul were to become the parents of our revered preacher Gerhard Roosen. After Janneken's marriage, Rinsken moved into the home of one of her daughters where she continued to ply her trade until the two younger girls were safely married. Sarah's husband was Pilgram Milder, who carried on a trade with Moscow. The youngest daughter, Elisabeth, married the tailor Hinrich van Sintern.

As well as providing the necessities of life for her children, Rinsken Quins served the community as a deaconess throughout the difficult years of her widowhood. All who knew this exceptional woman praised Rinsken for her considerate acts and charitable works, regardless of their own religious affiliation. According to her grandson Gerhard Roosen, Rinsken Quins died February 9, 1626, at the age of 67.

This is the extent of our knowledge concerning the original members of our community in Hamburg and Altona during the sixteenth century. Of all the surnames mentioned so far, only de Voss is still to be found among our congregation. Such is not the case with members of the Reformed Church. Many of the names belonging to their founding families can be identified in Hamburg today. Among them are B. Berenberg, de Dobbeler, Koyemann (?), and Amsinck.

It is regretable there is not more information available about the early years of the Flemish Community. It would be particularly interesting to know the manner in which members practiced their religion prior to the beginning of the seventeenth century, before a stable religious structure had been developed in Altona. Where were formal services conducted? How was it possible for these families to actively participate in their religion without being exposed as Taufgesinnten by the ubiquitous Lutherans? We are all too painfully aware of how strongly civil authorities, clergy, and local citizens opposed the sheltering of Anabaptists. Even the renewal of the contract between the Hamburg City Council and the Netherland refugees in 1635 contained a supplement protesting the addition of seven German and fourteen Wiedertäufer families to the previous list. Because this increase was contrary to the common will, it was only after lengthy negotiations between the City Council and the representatives of the refugee families that the concession was granted with a stipulation that the most recently admitted Germans and

Wiedertäufers would be excluded when the contract expired in fifteen years. As there was no evidence of protest against Samuel Stockman and Hans Siemons, both of whom had been named in the 1605 contract, it can be assumed neither they nor other members of the community were recognized as Taufgesinnten.

We are not certain how it was possible for our founding fathers to remain undetected throughout the thirty years between the 1605 and 1635 contract. However, some suppositions can be made. The citizens of Hamburg may have assumed the Taufgesinnten were members of the Reformed Church. A small membership at this early date also aided the Taufgesinnten in their efforts to remain inconspicuous. The total congregation could easily have assembled in private homes. It has been suggested that religious services were held outside the city walls. This conjecture is supported by a statement of the famous Mennonite Johann Clausen Kotte of Eiderstädt. During the month of September in 1608, Kotte publicly declared in Schleswig that the Eiderstädt Mennonites were closely affiliated with the Taufgesinnten in Hamburg. Furthermore, he claimed the combined membership observed their religious services before the city walls of Hamburg and Altona.

In the beginning of 1650, at the request of the Church Council, Gerhard Roosen drew up a list of all the community preachers whom he had known personally. (Gerhard was born in Altona in 1612.) First on the list was Cornelius Symons, who moved from Hamburg to Groningen in 1624, where he died. Next was Michael Steffens, "the third to serve Menno [Simons] in Oldesloe." Most recent investigations indicate Menno died in Wüstenfelde, near Oldesloe, during January of 1559. If this is correct, Michael Steffens must have been a very old man when Gerhard Roosen knew him. An existing document indicates Michael Steffens performed a marriage in Wandsbeck in 1604, uniting Wilhelm Hütter and his bride Duverke.¹⁰

Because Gerhard Roosen named Steffens the third preacher in the community, it appears he was not acquainted with the first. The names of other preachers who served, as given by Gerhard Roosen, will be included in the next chapter.

Information concerning the founding of the Flemish Community in Hamburg and Altona in the sixteenth century is scarce, but what is available reminds us of the words of Apostle Paul as cited in Hebrews 6:11-12.

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

¹⁰ On page 371 of the ninth extract in the Danish Library, it states that the furrier M. Steffens performed a marriage in Wandsbeck, but it does not agree with Bolten's contention that Steffens lived there.

CHAPTER II

The Early History of the Second Major Influx Into Our Community

Those whom we can identify as belonging to the first Mennonite Community in Hamburg and Altona arrived unannounced from the Netherlands. Except for de Voss, surnames of these families disappeared from our congregation during the intervening years. The situation was quite different with the influx originating in Holstein at the onset of the seventeenth century. At least two families identified with the second wave have remained on our membership rolls up to the present day. They are the names Roosen and van Sintern. On the other hand, members of a third important Goverts family have not belonged to our community since the middle of the eighteenth century, even though they continue to be strongly represented in Hamburg.¹¹

In order to gain a full understanding of the migration from Holstein, it is necessary to return once again to the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The Anabaptist movement, of which the Taufgesinnten are an integral part, began in Switzerland in 1522, and filtered from there into Holstein and Lübeck during the following decade. This was a period of strong religious and social agitation throughout Germany, and the ancient Hansiatic city of Lübeck was among those urban areas experiencing uprisings.¹² One result of the protests

¹¹ The first known member of the family spelled his name 'Govers'. It is only at a later date we find it written as 'Goverts'.

¹² Dr. Ludwig Keller, History of the Wiedertäufer (Münster, 1880), pp. 187 f.

was the appointment of Jürgen Wullenwever to the position of mayor and chairman of the newly elected council of Lübeck. This political advantage was possible only through the support of the fourth social station, comprised of handworkers and craftsmen. Wullenwever was a remarkable man of high ideals who empathized with the Anabaptist movement. A dedicated reformer himself, Wullenwever anticipated Anabaptist support in promoting his socialist ideas, first in Lübeck and then throughout Germany. Wullenwever was appointed mayor in 1534, the same year an Anabaptist army was being raised in the city of Münster in Westphalia. It has never been proved Wullenwever had any connection with the rebels, who were not affiliated with the peaceful Anabaptists in Holstein. [Part of the Mennonite code is the principle of non-aggression.] It is suggested, however, that the Münster Anabaptists probably expected help from Lübeck during the time they were under siege. In any event the rumor was passed among the attacking forces that Lübeck was harboring the Wiedertäufers. After the fall of Münster, when all fundamentalist sects were identified with the rebels and severely persecuted, many Taufgesinnten responded to the rumor and quietly gathered in and around Lübeck. Although we can safely assume immigrants formed the larger part of the religious community, it is also logical to suppose at least a portion of the population was native to the region. A reunion was said to have taken place in Lübeck between Menno Simons and David Joris in 1546, but we are given no details of such an event. [David Joris was one of the first known Anabaptists.]

Lübeck was not the only German city to offer sanctuary to peaceful religious refugees. The mandates of 1535, against the various restoration groups, were remitted by all six of the northern Hansiatic cities.¹³ A small religious community arose in the middle

¹³ Ibid., p. 186

of Wismar near the end of 1553, and managed to survive two years before the mandate of August 1, 1555, forced them to disband. According to Gerhard Roosen's notes, there were Taufgesinnten along the eastern seacoast, in Ovendorf, Hafkrug, Lübeck, and in surrounding territories, throughout the entire sixteenth century and beyond. In fact one community in Lübeck remained active far into the eighteenth century.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, Taufgesinnten gathered in Fresenburg near Oldesloe. Situated somewhat closer to Lübeck than Hamburg, this important estate was inherited in 1543 by Count Bartholomäus, a member of the old and famous Adels family of Ahlefeld. Further consideration of Fresenburg will be postponed while the history of one of the families making significant contributions to our community is treated.

The first individual known to us by the name of Roosen came from the duchy Jülich-Cleves.¹⁴ Originally separate entities, Jülich and Cleves were united in 1521 and the city of Cleves designated as the capital. Through this consolidation, Jülich-Cleves became the largest of the German provinces in territory and population. Political and social conditions there appear to have been superior to those in neighboring estates. Duke Johann III was a good-natured nobleman who took a fatherly interest in his subjects, promoted social reform, and vehemently resisted encroachments of the Catholic clergy on the religious rights of the peasants. Immediately after the terrible Peasants' War that raged between 1524 and 1525 and caused Middle and Northern Germany to tremble in fear, victorious princes and noblemen took devastating revenge throughout the countryside. In desperation the oppressed turned to Jülich-Cleves as a place of sanctuary. Among the refugees were many innocent

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 84 f.

Taufgesinnten who were being persecuted in spite of their principles of non-violence. Because of their sincere efforts to live as Christians, the creed of the Taufgesinnten spread rapidly in ever-widening circles.

Subjects of Jülich-Cleves did not control the exclusive rights to reformed attitudes toward Christian living and baptism, however. There were adherents to the new concepts of Christianity all along the western length of the border shared with the Netherlands, and even larger numbers of dissenter groups were active further south. Under these conditions the able and fluent Täufer leaders Johannes Campanus, Johann Clopriss, Dionysius Vinne of Diest, and Heinrich Schlachtscraf (or von Tongern) made an amazing number of converts among the inhabitants of Jülich-Cleves. These stalwarts were soon joined by the preachers Hermann Staprade from Mörs, Heinrich Roll from Grave by the Maas River, and Heinrich Gyss from Rothem. The greater part of Southern Jülich along the Netherlands border, including the provinces of Wassenberg, Hinsberg, Millen, Born, and Brüggen, were soon filled with Taufgesinnten and headquarters was established in the city of Wassenberg. When civil authorities in the capital city of Cleves became aware of the situation, they took immediate action. One of their first steps was the removal of the High Bailiff of Wassenberg, Werner von Pallant, from office because of his outspoken admiration for the Christian lives practiced by the baptism sects. The next step at repression was aimed at the leaders of the Anabaptists. With these men silenced, it was not difficult to force their followers to recant or accept exile. In this manner the various baptism sects within the duchy of Jülich-Cleves were suppressed near the end of 1532, a year prior to the tragic Münster rebellion.

Approximately three decades prior to these events, Coord Roosen was born at Cassenbrook, on the estate of Millendonk, in

the duchy of Jülich. We first hear of him as a widower with three sons and a daughter. It is not known at what point in his life he joined the Taufgesinnten, but it was soon after his second marriage that the storm of persecution broke. Gerhard Roosen concludes that Coord's new in-laws were Catholics as they refused to allow their daughter to accompany her husband in his flight north. However, one needs to take into account the fact that her time of confinement was near. The parents may well have been primarily concerned for the lives of their daughter and expected grandchild. In any event Coord apparently found it too dangerous to remain, and he left his wife in the safekeeping of her parents.

Having heard Lübeck offered a haven of peace, Coord took up a sturdy walking staff and set out on foot for Holstein. The youngest of Coord's children had to be carried constantly, and on occasion one of the others required similar assistance. [By modern computations, the journey would be approximately 300 miles. A conservative estimate for the time required for Coord and the children to complete the trek would be five weeks. If Coord found it necessary to finance his flight through a series of odd jobs along the way, we could add considerably to the length of time.] One evening when the weary family arrived at a roadside shelter, they were met by a monk who asked Coord where he was taking his little ones. Coord had left his wife, unborn child, and homeland rather than compromise his religious convictions. He could not, at this point, turn from Christ's example by telling his Catholic enemy a lie in order to save his life or keep his remaining children. Coord was well aware that if he admitted Lübeck to be his destination, the monk would guess he was an Anabaptist. Coord Roosen solved his dilemma by giving this noncommittal answer, "If you had to carry them, the burden would be too great for you."

Gerhard Roosen states the flight of his great grandfather was accomplished in 1532. This agrees with the findings of Dr. Keller concerning the persecution in Jülich. Of this episode in Coord's life, Gerhard would write, "This is the way of the true man, 'by foot as a pilgrim, under great stress to body and soul.'" After surviving the hardships of the trail, Coord chose to settle the family at Steinrade, about one and a quarter miles west of Lübeck. It may well be that the Mennonite family of van Gülick, which we find near Lübeck at this time, also fled from Jülich. Their name would indicate this was so.

Coord Roosen provided a meager living for his family in Steinrade by grinding the ingredients for gunpowder in a mortar. (His son Geerlinck would follow the same occupation.) Meanwhile, at the home of her parents, Coord's wife bore a son and named him Geerlinck, a name common to Jülich. During Geerlinck's early childhood, his mother often told him stories about his father. Similar recollections concerning the exemplary life of Coord were shared with Geerlinck by old friends and acquaintances, one of whom was the miller. Whenever young Geerlinck took grain to be ground, the miller would admonish him, "Hold to the good and amount to something." In this way the boy might grow to be as capable and godly a man as his father. Such remarks created a yearning in Geerlinck to find the missing Coord, but his grandparents forbade him to leave them alone. It was not until Geerlinck passed his twentieth birthday that his mother and grandparents died in quick succession leaving him free to begin the search. In 1554, Geerlinck Roosen took his own pilgrim's staff in hand, at long last, and followed the footsteps of his father. It is a great tragedy that father and son were never to meet in this life. Coord Roosen had been dead six months by the time Geerlinck arrived in Steinrade. Of Geerlinck's three half brothers, we know only that Herman, the eldest, married in or near

Lübeck, where he manufactured gunpowder and prepared leather. The other two young men emigrated to Riga [Latvia]. There is no information concerning the half sister.

A year after Geerlinck Roosen reached Steinrade, Menno Simons settled among his fellow believers at Fresenburg, near Oldesloe. He died there four years later.

In 1565 or 1566, eleven years after reaching Steinrade, Geerlinck married a widow by the name of Elisabeth, daughter of Pieter van Sintern. Those living among us at the present time who bear the van Sintern name are descendants of Pieter van Sintern. Elisabeth is known to have had a sister named Catharina and a brother Kasten (Karsten?). From these names we may assume that the van Sintern family originated somewhere in the Netherlands.

Geerlinck obtained a farm named Holzkamp, in 1566, for an annual rent of 200 reichsthaler. The village of Steinrade, the district of Steinrade, and the Holzkamp property were all part of the same estate called Morien (today known as Mori) and belonged to a nobleman by the name of Thomas von Kalven. The Holzkamp farm lay about an hour's walk outside Lübeck, and was close enough to clearly see the magnificent towers of the city in the distance. Descendants of Geerlinck Roosen would work this land as tenant farmers for more than 100 years. Not content with the meager income provided by the farm, Geerlinck continued to manufacture gunpowder until his death in July of 1611, at the age of 79. His wife, Elisabeth, was over 90 years old before she died in the summer of 1624. These were the grandparents of whom Gerhard Roosen spoke when he referred to the "Dear Elders."

Geerlinck induced his uncle Jan Koen, the son of his mother's sister, to come from Jülich to Holzkamp to teach him the fur trade. Sometime later Jan married Gertrude Averveld in Lübeck. From there the couple moved to Hafkrug on the eastern seacoast where Jan made

his living as a tanner. Geerlinck's eldest son, Coord, remained at Holzkamp after the death of his father and continued to manufacture gunpowder. Two mills were sufficient in the beginning, but business soon increased to the point where three were needed. Coord married Maria, daughter of David Steegen from Stettin. After Coord's death, in November of 1653, his body was interred in the cemetery at Rensefeld, where his parents, Geerlinck and Elisabeth, lay.

Of Geerlinck Roosen's five children, the youngest son is most important to us. Paul Roosen was born at Holzkamp in 1582. There he helped his father operate the powder business and work the farm, learning to plow, sow, reap, thresh, and care for livestock. After leaving Holzkamp at age eighteen, Paul went to Oldesloe where Dirck Eggeraat taught him how to process elk hides. During the ten years he lived at Oldesloe, Paul conscientiously attended Mennonite services in nearby Fresenburg. On May 10, 1611, he married Janneken Quins in a ceremony performed by a Lutheran pastor from Steinbeck by the name of Neve. Paul and his wife eventually settled in Altona, and it is through this couple that the present Roosen family in our area is descended.

To learn more of the Fresenburg Community, we turn again to the notes of Gerhard Roosen as contained in his small volume Accusations and Innocence of the Evangelical Taufgesinnten Christians, Known as Mennonites, written at Ratzeburg in 1702. Beginning on page 97, with only a few deletions, we read the following.

Forgive me if I write something of Fresenburg before I close. It is this place from which our Dear Elders [Gerhard's grandparents, as previously indicated] left, and to which they again returned. My blessed father was born on another noble estate, twenty years after the death of Menno Simons.¹⁵ He conscientiously

¹⁵ Menno Simons died in 1559 and Paul Roosen was born in 1582, twenty-three years later.

attended religious services conducted by the Taufgesinn-ten at Fresenburg. He learned and practiced his trade at Fresenburg until his move to Altona in 1611. My grandmother was over 90 years old when she died. During her lifetime she lived close to Menno Simons--one of the oldest preachers of the Frensenburg Community. There were other dear, old fellow-believers whom I do not know but who left record of the history of Fresenburg. From these records and other reports, recognized as reliable, I can form a basis upon which to write about the comings and goings of our people. The story begins with the early experiences of the Count¹⁶ as told by our people. In his youth this nobleman was called to serve the military in the conflict taking place in the Netherlands. There he saw and heard how converts to our belief were persecuted and imprisoned at the instigation of Roman Catholic authorities. One of our number was put to death by fire and others were condemned to die by hanging. This unchristian procedure, witnessed by the Count, caused him to be sympathetic with all those who were oppressed (as only one who is stubborn and easily moved to anger can be). He became determined that religious freedom would be enjoyed on his estates, and agents of the Inquisition with their diabolical persecution would not be allowed to enter. News of this Christian attitude spread quickly throughout the Netherlands and in the diocese of Cologne.¹⁷ A great many of those who heard of the Count's generosity left their homes and settled in Fresenburg. This movement of refugees fleeing religious persecution brought skilled workers to an area of Holstein where none had been before. (Only fat farmers had occupied this part of the Count's estates.) This unexpected influx caused the population to swell

¹⁶ This was the same Count Bartholomäus of Ahlefeldt who inherited the Fresenburg estate in 1543. See the Topography of the Duchys of Holstein by J. von Schröder.

¹⁷ The Archbishop and Elector of Cologne, Herman von Wied, had been well disposed toward evangelical sects since 1543. For this reason Taufgesinnten began to gather there. Menno labored in Cologne from 1544 to 1545 with great success. However, in 1546 the University of Cologne and the Roman Catholic clergy insisted von Wied be removed from office by the Pope. As a result violent persecution against evangelical movements broke out. Menno, with his ailing wife, risked great danger whenever he entered the city.

not only in the village of Wüstenfelde, where Menno Simons lived, died, and was buried,¹⁸ but also in the surrounding villages and unoccupied portions of the estate. In a short time, a number of small communities appeared, each with its own preacher. Danish noblemen in the area observed the prosperity and growth and, perhaps through jealousy, attempted to repress the refugees. The Lord of Fresenburg had promised his protection and now stood behind his vow. He issued an order that these people should not be forced to endure further harassment. It was thus possible for religious refugees to follow their chosen way of life, obeying the commandments of the Savior, Jesus Christ, according to their convictions. These humble souls came to a place of perfect peace and protection provided by a worldly shepherd as though they were sheep fleeing the world. This sanctuary offered them the opportunity to turn their eyes from the great temptation of earthly goods and thereby seek after a more righteous goal. For this protection the overlord asked the head of each household to pay one reichsthaler annually as an expression of fidelity. No further contribution was expected. Thus it was that these people could at last fully realize and accept a peaceful existence, and in that atmosphere pursue their religious practices with new dedication. It was in this place that Menno Simons accomplished the first printing of his books.¹⁹ A neighboring nobleman who opposed the distribution of the literature captured and imprisoned Menno. The protector [Count] watched the activities of the nobleman with great care, and when the time came for that man to pass through Fresenburg territory, the overlord waylaid the offender and demanded Menno's release. The violent death of

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The village of Wüstenfelde is long gone, but there remains a very large field called 'das wüste Feld' [the fallow field] belonging to the Fresenburg dairy farm of Schadehorn. Drainage of the area has resulted in the recovery of several earthen vessels. Local tradition insists a great general was buried in the field. It was also in this place where Menno lived on his farm, and it is here he is said to rest.

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Menno completed his first written work in Wüstenfelde in October of 1556, "An entirely clear and instructive answer to M. Mycron's teacher." His last brief article, completed before his death, was published much later and is the "very basic answer to Selis' and Lemke's unearned reputations as thieves."

the nobleman made possible the distribution of Menno's writings and with them the story of our persecutions and the precepts of our faith. The communities that had so suddenly arisen now slowly diminished and were lost. This may have occurred because skilled workmen could make more money in the larger cities. Praise is due his Highness Ernestus, Duke of Holstein and Count of Schauenburg, who allowed these workers to enter his domain.

Little else is remembered from this time to the end of the sixteenth century. However, we do know about a fellow believer by the name of François Noë who lived in Hamburg. François undertook many services for an important landowner, and through these successfully completed assignments gained concessions for our people. A valuable piece of land was made available for the use of our community in Altona, near Hamburg. They were granted freedom to build houses and to pursue their businesses and trades, and because of these privileges were able to provide for themselves. They were allowed to practice their religion, but were required to do so through peaceful means. Our people were also permitted to bury their dead in this property. All these privileges, as well as a guarantee of protection, were theirs for an annual fee of one reichsthaler, just as had been paid in Fresenburg. Many of our fellow worshipers moved from Fresenburg to Altona during the days the Count of Schauenburg ruled.

The Thirty-year War in Holstein, in 1627, was another reason our members fled to Hamburg and Lübeck. For those who were fortunate enough to be in Altona at that time, it was a period of peace.²⁰ After a time, a few refugees returned to Fresenburg, but others continued to leave until none of our people are to be found in or around Fresenburg at the present time.²¹

²⁰ Tilly and Wallenstein marched on Holstein in September of 1627, with an army of 80,000 men. The first peace terms were negotiated with Lübeck, and by May 12, 1629, the Imperial Troops were recalled. Holstein was horribly ravaged during the beginning phase of the conflict.

²¹ This was written by Gerhard Roosen in 1702, his ninetieth year.

In 1601, Count Ernst of Schauenburg gave the Mennonites permission to move from Fresenburg to Altona. A large group elected to leave at once, and almost all who remained vacated Fresenburg by 1627. It appears most of these Fresenburg Mennonites settled in Hamburg, with only a few choosing Altona. There were also some who preferred to establish residence in Lübeck. It is indeed unfortunate that we know only the names of three involved in this migration. They are the preacher Michael Steffens, who lived about a fifteen-minute journey by foot outside Fresenburg in Oldesloe; Hans Goverts, whose father Willem lived in Kibitzdorf by Fresenburg; and Paul Roosen. It is not known if the van Sintern family came from Fresenburg or somewhere nearer Lübeck. It may be recalled that members of this family were among the first mentioned in our church records.

CHAPTER III

A Time of Gathering--

The First Forty Years Following the Founding of The Community in Altona

For the Mennonite Community in Hamburg and Altona, the first forty years of the seventeenth century can be compared to the forty years spent by the children of Israel in the wilderness. During this period of gathering and preparation, a new generation was raised up to face a succession of internal conflicts that would rock the community for more than fifty years. We have only fragments of information to guide us in the reconstruction of this early history because neither the membership rolls nor the community records are available. These irreplaceable documents were lost during the time of contention between the parent community and the separated faction of the Dompelaars.

The original name of our congregation was the Flemish Community. At a later date the names Flemish, Frisian, and High German were adopted. The consolidation of these diverse Taufgesinnten into one congregation was accomplished in 1629 by the formalization of their creed in a declaration of faith called the 'Olive Branch'. A copy of this Confession can be found among the pages of the oldest songbook owned by the community. These three divisions together with the Waterländer represented the major groups of Taufgesinnten in the Netherlands and Germany. At the beginning the names Flemish, Frisian, High German, and Waterländer identified the place of origin for the membership, but in time they became party designations without valid cultural differences. The High German and Waterländer

groups came from northern Holland. In general these Taufgesinnten were not as strict about rules of segregation and prohibition as were the others, and their religious doctrine was less harsh.

A remnant of the old Frisian congregation in Hamburg called themselves the Twisck Community, taking their name from the preacher P. Jansz Twisck. There must have been supporters for Twisck outside Hamburg, for he visited Taufgesinnten in Holstein and Eiderstedt in 1625 or 1626. There appeared to be no major differences between this tiny Twisck Community and the larger Flemish one. Jan de Marne' from Hamburg was one of their preachers. According to our records, he performed a marriage ceremony in 1669 (probably in Hamburg²²) for Adrian Noë and Sara Wynanz, two members of the Flemish Community. No Lutheran minister would officiate at the wedding because it involved a union of first cousins and was prohibited by Danish law.

In the Netherlands in 1586, Flemish and Frisian Taufgesinnten formed the Housebuyer and Counter-housebuyer factions, with most of the Flemish supporting the Counter-housebuyers. It is said this division was caused by Thomas Bintgens, a preacher from the Flemish Community in Franecker, Friesland. A sales contract for the controversial house offers no clue as to the original cause of disagreement or the reason for final separation. The small number who chose to side with Bintgens were called Housebuyers, or people of Thomas Bingtens. Members of this group governed their lives by extremely severe rules.

Jan de Buyser, who was mentioned in the renewed refugee contract of 1635, was a preacher for the Housebuyer Community in Hamburg. Jan was born in Haarlem in 1591, baptized in Amsterdam,

²² The Flemish Community meeting house stood on Rosenstrasse [Roses Street] in Altona. The modest buildings on this site were destroyed by fire in 1713. (Bolten, pp. 350, 351.)

and married in Haarlem. After the wedding he lived in Hamburg but operated a flower shop in Roosengasse [Roses Lane] in Altona. A house book from the year 1643, said to have been printed by de Buyser in Altona in 1664, is still available in our archives.²³ A second volume credited to de Buyser was titled Closer Explanation. Both these publications were written in the Dutch language.

Members of the Housebuyers joined our community between the years 1669 and 1672. We may conclude that this transfer of allegiance was due to the death of the preacher de Buyser because members of his family were among the group. The eight Housebuyers who came to our community in March of 1682 were probably the last members of that community. By this time the little Frisian congregation had disbanded, its families moving to the Flemish Community between 1666 and 1671. Even the widow of Jan de Marne' joined our community in 1685.

According to Gerhard Roosen those preachers who served the Flemish Community during these first forty years--other than Michael Steffens and Cornelius Symons, who went to Groningen in 1624--were as follows.

(1) Jan Barchman left Groningen and went to Glückstadt where he remained until his death. A Mennonite community had been formed in Glückstadt in 1620, soon after the founding of this city.

(2) Heinrich Sicks was originally Lutheran. He served the Flemish Community about 1630 and was both loved and held in high esteem by our congregation. Unfortunately, Sicks was suspected of seducing his maid and had to leave Hamburg around 1635. He apparently made restitution, or cleared his name, for on August 28, 1640, this blessed elder of God united Gerhard Roosen and his bride Mayken Amoury in holy wedlock. The ceremony was performed in

²³ Bolten, op. cit., p. 352.

the Amoury home on Michaelis Street in Hamburg. Religious services undertaken by Sicks were again mentioned in 1641.

(3) Jacob Beerens eventually fell into community disfavor and moved to Wandsbeck, where he died.

Gerhard Roosen blamed Beerens and Jan Borchers for the separation of the Dompelaars from the parent community. Borchers was from Lübeck, but he died in Altona.

Preachers for our community served on a gratuitous basis, supporting themselves and their families through a secular trade or business. Under this arrangement, it was sometimes necessary for these men to resign and move to other cities where they could make more money.

During this entire period and beyond, the Mennonite Community owned no building in which they could worship according to the dictates of their consciences. J. Claussen Kotte suggests one reason was because religious services were not conducted within Altona. The congregation would gather just outside the city limits, or they might meet in Hamburg or its suburbs. Location depended upon the condition of Hamburg Berg Way (St. Pauli Way). Or again, whether the city gates of Hamburg were open or closed. The threat of war was all too frequent, and when a state of hostility existed, the gates were closed for protection. It is also suspected the Hamburg Taufgesinnten did not want attention called to themselves by traveling to Altona every Sunday.

The antagonistic attitude of the Lutherans toward Anabaptist was particularly virulent at the time the contract with the Netherland refugees came up for renewal in 1635. Seven German and fourteen Wiedertäufer families were allowed to remain only upon specified conditions and after lengthy deliberations among members of the City Council, representatives of the citizens of Hamburg, and the deputies for the refugees. The heads of all twenty-one families

were polled before the contract was accepted. Under its terms permission for the additional families to remain in Hamburg would terminate in fifteen years. In retrospect the drawn-out negotiations and stringent conditions appear unnecessary because animosity toward this group slowly dissipated.

Among the fourteen Taufgesinnten included in both the 1605 and 1635 contracts were the names of Stockman, de Voss, and Siemons. Samuel Stockman (probably the son of the first Samuel Stockman) agreed to a tax of 95 thaler. His father had been taxed 24 thaler in 1605. Abraham Stockman, the younger brother of Samuel, was married to Amerens, daughter of the preacher Heinrich Sicks. Abraham's assessment of 150 thaler indicates he was quite wealthy. Gilbert de Voss agreed to pay 65 thaler (in 1605 a 'Giesbert' de Voss paid 10 thaler). Hans Siemons had made little financial progress. In 1635 he was required to pay 45 thaler, an increase of only five. Other Taufgesinnten mentioned in the contract were Gerdt Lammers (Lambers), who was married in 1630, according to our church records; Gerhard Roosen's father-in-law Hans Amori (Amoury); Jean de Buser (Buyser), the Housebuyer preacher; Peter Ahrens; Hans Harmens; and Daniel Janssen, Jr. There were three additional men by the name of Janssen who could possibly have been Taufgesinnten, but we cannot be certain.

Relations between citizens of Hamburg and the Taufgesinnten living in their midst were far from harmonious, but the hatred and envy of the Hamburg businessmen against affluent refugees living in Altona was intense. In 1634 they complained to the Hamburg City Council that Mennonites living in Altona were operating warehouses in Hamburg. (This complaint was largely aimed at the Roosen and Goverts families.) Because of this, storage fees rightfully belonging to local landlords were collected by outsiders. Protests against Taufgesinnten who refused to accept the customs of their adopted

homeland were voiced by Pastor Mag. Jodocus Edzardi Glanaeus. In 1636 this clergyman distributed a pamphlet called In Defense of Infant Baptism. Included in the publication was a strong statement against Mennonites of Hamburg Berg Way who attended services in Altona conducted in the Dutch language.

Although two of our founding families arrived in Altona almost simultaneously, indications are the Goverts family preceded the Roosen by a slight margin. By 1634 Hans Goverts owned one or more warehouses in Hamburg and soon afterward acquired property on the Freiheit where our chapel now stands. This same plot of ground had previously belonged to François Noë II, as reported in an earlier chapter. Sometime after the sale of land to Hans Goverts, François entered into an agreement with Hans Siemons, and the new partners purchased property with the intention of constructing a fish-pond. The owners of an adjacent courtyard and well were afraid the pond would contaminate their water and so took François Noë II and Hans Siemons to court in Ottensen.

Maycken, the sister of François Noë II, was married to Hilger Hilgers, her brother's former real-estate partner. While their first residence was in Hamburg and their second in Altona, Hilger conducted his business in Leipzig and Frankfurt. The merchandise handled by Hilger consisted of plush velvet and other wares all similar to those sold by François. Quite successful at first, Hilger built an impressive townhouse surrounded by a large courtyard and formal gardens. Gerhard Roosen candidly remarked that this ostentatious display of wealth proved disastrous to Hilger's business. Within a short time, his Altona property came into the hands of the Goverts family, and the plot on Rosen Street eventually became our community cemetery. On Easter of 1630, Janss (Hans) Goverts and Wolter Noë, son of Adrian and grandson of François Noë II, bought real estate from guardians of the minor children of Adrian Noë. The

houses and land described in the contract lay near the contested pond and Bornehofe [courtyard and well]. A downpayment of 900 marks was made toward the total purchase price of 1,800 marks. An interest rate of 6 per cent was to be charged against 300 of the unpaid balance. The sales contract, drawn by Hanss Pape, was signed by the preacher Hindrick Sycks, Daniel Janssen, Samuel Stockmann, Abraham Stockmann, and Jan Noë. All but Jan were acting as agents. The document, on file in the Mennonite Archives, indicates final payment was received by Henrich Six (Hindrick Sycks) and his associates, from the widow and heirs of Hans Goverts, on Easter of 1641.

Another contract, dated Shrove Tuesday of 1630, transferred title to the bleaching ground near the big and little ponds. Heinrich Schumacher purchased one part and the second was bought by Jan and Wolter Noë, the minor children of Adrian Noë, and a son-in-law Peter Wynands. Hans Goverts, as immediate neighbor, retained legal right to that portion of the property on which water was located. From the foregoing documents, we may conclude that the holdings of Hans Goverts were of significant value.

Three generations of Goverts immediately preceding Hans claimed Antwerp as their place of birth. Hans's great grandfather Peter was born in 1475. The year of birth for his son Godeward is unknown. Willem, the father of Hans Goverts, was born in 1531 and died in 1608, thirty years after the birth of his son Hans on Ascension Day of 1578. It is thought that Willem fled Antwerp during Alva's period of persecution, for we find him at Oldesloe soon afterward. Hans Goverts came to our community from Oldesloe, rose to the position of deacon, and died here on February 9, 1639.

Paul Roosen and his family left Fresenburg and arrived in Altona in 1611, soon after Hans Goverts. The Roosens rented the house of François Noë II, on the corner of Bleicher and Rosen

Streets for a brief time before purchasing it as a permanent home. Although some descendants of Paul Roosen moved to Hamburg, there were Roosen family members living in this house until 1713, when Altona was virtually destroyed by fire. Paul had learned the techniques of tanning leather while in Oldesloe. He continued to pursue this line of work in Altona, and for ten to twelve years traveled to trade fairs throughout Germany selling the hides and furs he prepared. As business improved he hired others to take over most of the responsibilities. Paul Roosen reached the rank of Ältester Deacon [with authority to baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, and ordain ministers] before his death on February 29, 1649, at the age of 67.

Paul Roosen's first child, born February 25, 1612, was a son named Geeritt (Gerhard) who would play a major role in the affairs of the community. Gerhard Roosen was apprenticed to Hans Amoury in 1628. After eight years he reached the age of twenty-five and was well qualified to operate his own dry-goods shop. Resigning his position with Hans Amoury on the evening of Shrove Tuesday, 1636, Gerhard was ready to open his business by the following Easter. Gerhard Roosen's commercial acumen proved so remarkable that the hosery manufacturer Hasenknütter of Hamburg sponsored his bid for an official coat of arms. When awarded, this symbol of affluence and prestige included a shield bearing three stylized roses. Gerhard married Maria Amoury, the daughter of his former master, on August 28, 1640, in Hamburg. However, he was not financially prepared to set up his own household until St. Michael's Day [September 29] of 1641. It is assumed the young couple lived with Maria's parents until that time.

Like Gerhard Roosen, Hans Amoury descended from ancestors who abandoned home and country for the sake of religion. Hans's great grandfather Collart Amoury, from Brabant, married Martjen Cochet. A son Huybert was born to this couple before they moved

to Cologne. Huybert's son Hans married N. Hemelscoers and two children were born of this union. When Hans failed to take these infants to church for baptism, a formal complaint against him was placed with the civil authorities. To protect himself and his loved ones, Hans moved the family from Cologne to Utrecht [in Holland]. There he opened a plumbing business and apparently lived out his life in peace. Hans's father Huybert Amoury, who accompanied the family in their flight, lived to be over 100 years of age before his death in Utrecht. In 1584, prior to the time Hans Amoury and his wife, N. Hemelscoers, left Cologne, a son was born to them who was also named Hans. Amsterdam was just a few miles from Utrecht, and it was here young Hans learned to make a special type of cloth.²⁴ Whether for financial or religious purposes, we do not know, but Hans moved to Hamburg about February 1, 1610, and there entered the service of a merchant by the name of Gysbrecht van Daelen. He completed his apprenticeship as a clerk within the year and was free to open his own dry-goods store. While it was necessary to operate on a commission basis in the beginning, Hans was soon able to finance his own enterprise. Seven years later Gerhard Roosen joined Hans Amoury as an apprentice and the two worked closely together. After Gerhard withdrew to open his own establishment in 1636, Hans changed to another line of merchandise. This second venture proved disappointing and he founded a money exchange and trust company. Having achieved a great measure of success and contentment, Hans Amoury died on October 15, 1663, at the age of 79. It is said he left behind a reputation for having been an honest and shrewd businessman. Hans Amoury's wife was Elisabeth, the daughter of Samuel Stockman, the elder. They were married on

²⁴ Kaffa was the name of the fabric Hans Amoury learned to make. The Kaffamacherreihe [fabric makers' row] in Hamburg was named for this particular cloth.

July 28, 1616. One of their four children was Mayken (or Maria), who was born September 23, 1622. It was she whom Gerhard Roosen chose for his bride.

Gerhard Roosen's sister Elisabeth was born January 21, 1620. She married Pieter Goverts, a son of Hans Goverts, on September 19, 1643. Pieter bought elk hides in Moscow and resold them in Germany. Gerhard's brother Herman Roosen was born July 21, 1627. Herman's second wife Maria was the eldest daughter of Herman Goverts, the eldest son of Hans Goverts. It is through Herman and Maria Goverts Roosen that the present family of Roosen in this area descends.²⁵

Pieter van Sintern, who lived in Holstein, is considered the progenitor of the next founding family to be considered. His daughter Elisabeth married Gerhard Roosen in 1565 or 1566. Of Pieter van Sintern's three children, Karsten was the youngest. Karsten's third child Hendrik married Elisabeth Quins and became a tailor. Elisabeth Quins was the sister of Gerhard Roosen's mother. From this point on, there is a period of a hundred years about which we can state nothing with complete assurance. The present van Sintern family originated with Hinrich van Sintern, who was baptized in Lübeck in 1710. His third marriage was to IIsabe Roosen on November 19, 1724. The son of Hinrich and IIsabe was also named Hinrich. He married Gertrude Vergoes on November 27, 1763. Their fifth child, born August 21, 1774, was the third to bear the name Hinrich van Sintern. Hinrich married Anna Marg. Möller on November 8, 1797. Their third child Jan was born in 1801, and he married Cornelia Margaretha Schots on February 24, 1839. Two children were born to this couple--Elisabeth, the present widow of Huckfeldt, and Hinrich, a deacon in our community. It is possible the Hinrich van Sintern who was

²⁵ Most of the information concerning the Goverts family came from Amtsrichter Dr. E. Goverts' excellent pedigree chart. The author expresses appreciation for permission to use this material.

baptized in 1710 was the son of Karsten van Sintern II, son of the first Karsten. According to Gerhard Roosen's notes, Karsten van Sintern II married a woman in Lübeck by the name of Lucht. This couple lived in Oldesloe. Some of Karsten's brothers remained in Altona while others moved to Amsterdam. No further reliable evidence is available.

Religious services in Altona were probably held in the remodeled building at the back of Paul Roosen's property on Grosse Freiheit soon after François Noë obtained permission from Count Schauenburg for the community to do so. Our church stands today on this original site. In the beginning it was necessary to hold meetings discretely and inconspicuously, but after the death of Count Ernst von Schauenburg in 1622, public services could be conducted. Count Jodacus Hermann granted this religious freedom, and the last of the Schauenburg heirs confirmed it in 1635. In 1611 the community purchased land from Paul Roosen that had previously belonged to François Noë. A second piece of property that had also been in the possession of François Noë was sold to Paul Roosen in 1619 by Willem de Mey.

The community had no land in which to bury their dead at this time, but were allowed to use the cemetery in Altona owned by the Reformed Church. Hans Amoury was among those of our members who had plots at this location.

Gerhard Roosen lists, in chronological order, the names of those who served as deacons during this period. They were Hans Goverts, the elder; Gerhard's father Paul Roosen, Ältester Deacon in 1649; Hendrik Pender, who died in 1658; Samuel Stockman II, who served in 1661, was released upon his petition, and died in 1678; Jan Jansen, a shoemaker by trade, served in 1657 and later went to Amsterdam; and Herman Goverts, who died in 1681. There were also a few widows who were deaconesses in the community. Rinsken Quins

acted in this capacity until her death on February 9, 1626. Maycken Goverts, widow of Hans Goverts, the elder, was also named as a deaconess on page 19 of our church records. Maycken died June 10, 1672, at the age of 91.

Because the Taufgesinnten were not permitted to hold public services in Altona during the first twenty years of the seventeenth century, marriages were usually performed by the Lutheran pastor Jürgen Neve at Steinbek. According to our church records, Pastor Neve united Hans Goverts and Maycken Harmensen on May 30, 1604; Paul Roosen and Janneken Quins on May 10, 1611; Symon de Vlieger and Marie Koen before St. Martin's Day in 1621; Peter Plus and Mayken Quins on October 26, 1610. Peter Plus lived first in Pinneberg and then on Freiheit Street in Altona, according to his own statement. It was while he was in Altona that he paid ten reichsthaler to the mayor and county magistrate at Pinneberg.²⁶ The wedding ceremony for Peter and his bride was performed at Steinbek, but the reception for family and friends was held two days later in Altona. In 1622, after the community received permission to conduct public services, weddings were held in our own chapel. This did not include marriages of cousins, which were prohibited by civil laws of sanguinity. [Marriages between cousins became almost inevitable among the founding families because members were expected to choose mates within their own faith.]

It was not until forty years after the Flemish Community (now referred to as Mennonite) was established that an official charter was granted. Count Otto VI was the last male heir to the noble Schauenberg line. With his death, on November 5, 1640, Altona

²⁶ When Altona achieved the status of a market center in 1604, residents of that city became subject to the mayor and council of Ottensen in cases of law enforcement. In matters of civil administration and courts of justice, Altona was subject to Pinneberg. Land records for Altona were held at Pinneberg.

became a possession of King Christian IV of Denmark. As absolute ruler it was within his power to grant the following privileges to the Mennonite Community on June 6, 1641.

We Christian IV are, by the grace of God, King of Denmark, Norway, Wenden, and Gothen; Duke of Schleswig, Holstein, Stormann, Dithmarschen; Count of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst, and so forth. With this document a declaration is made to all our subjects in our domains. By our pleasure you Mennonite businessmen and craftsmen in Altona, who have with few exceptions been persecuted for more than forty years, are given the following rights and privileges. You may hold religious services. You may engage in occupations and professions without harassment. You are to be accorded equal justice and mercy as you enjoyed in times past. Furthermore, you are to be allowed to compete in recognized trades against all worthy competitors, and you may defend yourselves. We now grant each of the foregoing rights as we have conceded and stated them, and through the power of this, our open declaration, the present and stated civil administration is to provide you with protection and recognize your right to practice your beliefs and religious services and to engage, unhindered, in your occupations and professions. In return you must accept reasonable restraints and you must pursue a peaceful life. No one is to impose our religion upon you or tempt you to abandon your convictions. But in all, even as in your gainful employment, you shall be untroubled and without fear. These things we hereby declare under our kingly signature and seal. Given at our residence in Glücksburg on the sixth day of June in the year 1641.

Christian
/signed/

Under the guiding hand of God, our people had grown strong from within and without during the forty years that had passed since the community was first formed in Altona. It could be said, as expressed in the Book of Psalms, "The swallow had found her nest." The King of Denmark had officially recognized our community and promised his protection. The protest of 1635, against the addition of twenty-one refugee families to the existing contract with the

Hamburg City Council, was the last major attempt to exclude Taufgesinnten from the area. But this was only one of many threats to the survival of the community. It was only through exceptional foresight and discretion our founding fathers were able to remain true to their religious convictions, for in so doing they were defying harsh mandates issued against all Anabaptists. It is amazing that in spite of all these difficulties, such families as Stockman, Goverts, Roosen, de Voss, de Vlieger, and others not only became wealthy but were able to command the respect of local citizens. As far as we know, internal peace was enjoyed by our people throughout this period. Once threats were removed from outside the community, however, members began to fall into sinful ways. The spirit of Christian innocence, moral strength, and earnest piety that had been the basis of the old Flemish Community was gradually lost. Under these conditions our people entered a time of strife and contention leading to painful divisions. Without the constant help of the Lord, the Mennonite Community in Hamburg and Altona would not have survived. The following account of these years should serve as a grave warning that we must remain temperate and peaceful throughout all difficulties. This is the basis of gospel truth.

CHAPTER IV

Sixty Years of Conflict and Expansion

The first violent quarrel to shake our community concerned the Dompelaars.²⁷ In the year 1648, seventeen of our members attempted to introduce innovations in the observance of basic religious ordinances. Baptism, they said, should be accomplished by immersion. The Last Supper should be observed in the evening, and should be preceded by a formal washing of feet. Only unleavened bread should be served during the sacrament ceremony. According to Gerhard Roosen, the preacher Jacob Beerens from Lübeck was the chief instigator, with the preacher Jan Borchers his staunch supporter. It is not clear if these men intended to impose the new practices upon the entire congregation or if they only wanted permission to observe the changes themselves. It is certain that these practices had not previously been part of Mennonite services. Our community was in close accord with the Fresenburg membership who received direct instructions from Menno Simons. If Menno had, at any time, mentioned baptism by immersion in his teachings, the Fresenburg congregation would have adopted this method and we would have followed their lead. The conclusion that Menno never proposed baptism by immersion is further strengthened by the fact that the Dompelaars did not cite him, in their written history, as an authority favoring this practice. No one knows for sure who or what influenced members of our community to support baptism by immersion. Bolten offers four possible sources. (1) This innovation may have come from

²⁷ Bolten, loc. cit.

certain Taufgesinnten in Holland. (2) Abraham de Voss may have introduced the practice because he had been baptized by immersion by Baptists in Colchester, England. (3) Baptism by immersion may have been suggested in the writings of 1646 and 1647 by Taufgesinnten from Holstein. (4) These ideas may have originated with the Polish-Prussian communities.²⁸ Gerhard Roosen reached the rank of deacon in February of 1649, following the death of his father Paul, and was therefore in a position of authority in the community. Had he taken a less obstinate stand, the impasse between the older, conservative members and the radical Dompelaars might never have been reached. Karsdorp, the elder, eulogist at Gerhard's funeral, commented that Gerhard's stubborn and stiff-necked attitude was not in the best interest of the community. Regardless of where the blame lay, relations between the two factions continued to deteriorate, and on at least one occasion the Danish militia had to be called upon to keep the peace. Currying public sentiment, the Dompelaars published a number of pamphlets in which they denounced their former brethren. Among the complaints made against the parent community was the charge that the Dompelaars had been forcefully ejected from the meeting house. Furthermore, they had been refused a key to the building, even though they had donated toward its purchase. Additional information concerning this sad state of affairs can be gathered from a document recording the transfer of property from the community to Janneken Roosen, widow of Paul Roosen, and her immediate family. Those named in the contract, in addition to Janneken, were her son-in-law Pieter Goverts and her three sons Geerit, Herman, and Coert. The official document, written in Dutch and dated January 11, 1656, reads as follows.

This document declares that in the year 1649 the house and yard (on the Freiheit in Altona), together with all

²⁸Bolten, op. cit., pp. 310 f.

rights of ownership and possession, was transferred from the Flemish Community to Paul Roosen's widow. This action was taken to end the controversy (obsessing the community over the use of this house). All moneys previously donated toward the purchase of said property have been spent on the house and grounds. The widow, of her own free will, hereby makes the following promises on behalf of herself and her heirs. Any member of the community is to be allowed to preach in the house built for this purpose, and which now stands behind the Roosen living quarters. Furthermore, as long as the said property remains in the possession of the Widow Roosen or her heirs, the congregation will be allowed to meet together and to hold services there, without interference, as often as it is deemed necessary. The community is obliged to pay nothing for the use of the property except the yearly fee levied by the civil authorities or their representatives. As long as the Widow Roosen or her heirs are able, they are to keep the building in good repair. When this is no longer possible, the community will assume this responsibility.

It is further agreed that if the building becomes too old or too small to accommodate the congregation, another building will be erected on the same site by the community, providing the Widow Roosen does not choose to do so. The new building will be made as large as is considered necessary to serve the congregation, but it is in no way to block access to the domicile of the Widow Roosen. Should the said property be put up for sale, the community is to be given first opportunity of purchase at a price approximately one-hundred reichsthaler below all other bids. This document is attested to by the community and signed by the Widow Roosen and her children, without intent to defraud, on the eleventh day of January in the year 1656, in the city of Altona.

It is obvious the primary purpose of this contract was to deny the Dompelaars access to the meeting house. On the reverse side of this document, it is noted the future heirs are not to be held financially responsible for the property as its use was to be restricted to religious services.

Four preachers transferred membership to our community in the fall of 1649 because of differences over the performance of religious

rites. They were Isaac Janss Sneep from Haarlem, Pieter Janss Moyer from Leiden, Tieleman Tielen, and Tobias Goverts van den Wyngaard from Amsterdam. Nothing more is known about community contention until two opposing factions appeared in 1656. This break proved painful for these reasons. First, division was not considered a satisfactory solution for a community supposedly fashioning its life style on the gentle, loving, and forgiving Christ. Second, it caused hard feelings among family members. For example the majority of the well-known Stockman family remained loyal to the Flemish Community, while a smaller portion elected to join the Dompelaars. Samuel Stockman II served as deacon to the Flemish Community for a time, but requested to be relieved of his duties in 1661. When the question arises as to the cause of his early retirement, the most plausible answer would seem to be friction among members of his family. Another severe blow was the loss of the original church records dating back to the founding of the community. Two preachers Beerens and Borchers and one or more deacons chose to go with the Dompelaars and took the priceless documents with them. During the years following the separation, these irreplaceable records were lost.

Abraham de Voss was the first preacher to serve the small group of Dompelaars. A copper engraving of a large windmill that was once attached to his house on Grosse Elbe Street in Altona still exists. This same building later became the van der Smissen brewery. By 1663, de Voss, Beerens, and Borchers were no longer preachers for the Dompelaar Community, according to a book published by Pastor Bastian van Weenigem. Apparently the trio was replaced by preachers and deacons Samuel Stockmann Isaacks, Hendrick Peters, Anthony de Gries, Balthasar Denner Hippoliti, and Claes Dirckss. Samuel Stockmann Isaacks, a merchant, may have been a grandson of Samuel Stockman I, through his second wife. If so he would also have been a nephew of Samuel Stockman II, a deacon in the Mennonite Community.

It is certain Balthasar Denner was the son of Hippolytus Denner, a Mennonite convert from the Catholic Church in Schwaben. Balthasar proved to be a zealous Dompelaar deacon up to the time of his sudden death on December 15, 1681. His son Jacob Denner, a blue dyer in his youth, became the most renown of all Dompelaar preachers. In addition to his own congregational responsibilities, Jacob Denner served the Flemish Community and surrounding area from 1684 until his death, February 17, 1746, at the age of 80. Jacob Denner's daughter Catharina married Dominicus van der Smissen, a well-known artist who painted pictures of animals and portraits. Dominicus had become a member of the Flemish Community in 1725, but Catharina refused to transfer her allegiance from the Dompelaars, and insisted her father Jacob perform their marriage ceremony December 29, 1730. Jacob's son Balthasar became a famous portrait painter. He also retained his membership with the Dompelaars throughout his life.

Because they were denied access to Flemish Community property, the Dompelaars held meetings in a house on Reichen Street in Altona. Their first baptisms were performed in a pond rented for the purpose in Barmbek, not far from Wandsbek.

In 1650, after the separation of the Dompelaars from the parent community, the Flemish Church Council asked Gerhard Roosen to prepare a new membership book to replace the missing one. Next to the private notes of Gerhard Roosen, this record provides our most reliable and important source of information about the early history of our community. As valuable as these documents are, however, they cannot replace the original records.

After the departure of the Dompelaars, the large Flemish Community found itself in need of preachers. The first selected was Boudewyn Doom from Haarlem. After serving a short time, he moved to Glückstadt, and from there returned to Haarlem where he died. Berend Rulifs (Roelifs) was the next preacher and Äldester appointed.

Rulifs and his family came from the Sluys in de Syp (North Holland) in September of 1650. The third preacher was Joost von Steen, who came from Elbingen in May of 1652. By September 21, 1656, he had been relieved of his duties and exiled because of his immoral relationship with a widow from the community. On June 17, 1655, before von Steen's removal, Wilhelm Wynands was elected by the brethren to serve as a preacher. A son of Pieter Wynands and Perina Noë (the niece of François Noë II), Wilhelm was a man of great ability who proved an inspiration for the entire congregation. After his death, December 21, 1658, copies of his sermons were distributed. Wilhelm Wynands was buried in the Noë plot at Saint Michaelis Cemetery. The preacher Hilbrandt Harmens assumed his office on October 20, 1659, less than a year after the death of Wynands. Harmens and his wife came to our community from Campen in Oberysse!

There had not been time for the breach between the Flemish Community and the Dompelaars to heal before another crisis arose. In 1647 George Fox launched a new religious movement in England. This organization called itself the 'Society of Friends', but its members were known to their enemies as Quakers or Shakers. Taufgesinnten in the Netherlands, Germany, Hamburg, and Altona held many principles in common with the Quakers. Both movements prohibited the taking of oaths and both believed in plain living and an abstinence from worldly pleasures. When Quakers organized themselves in Hamburg, this similarity of beliefs caused unrest among our congregation and ten of our members joined their ranks. Another group from our community, including Berend Rulifs and his entire family, became Quakers on November 30, 1659. Not content with simple disassociation, Rulifs denounced his former brethren, their form of baptism, their observance of the Last Supper, and the methods by which their preachers served the Mennonite Community. His

spiteful remarks became the basis for slanderous accusations by outsiders and caused a good deal of sorrow among his old friends. June 24, 1660, the Hamburg City Council issued a mandate ordering all Quakers to vacate the city within four days. This eviction notice, announced from pulpits throughout Hamburg, forced Rulifs and his family to return to Alkmaar in Holland. Abraham Roosen, son of Herman and nephew of Gerhard, joined the Society of Friends in Amsterdam twenty years or more after this episode.

Due to the exigencies of the time, Hilbrandt Harmens found himself the sole preacher of the Flemish Community. Knowing it was impossible for one man to meet the ecclesiastical needs of the community without working undue hardship upon his family, the brethren made concerted efforts to find additional preachers. The diary of Gerhard Roosen recalls how he and Dr. Werner Janss Colombier were called to their positions.

Because there were insufficient preachers to serve the community, it was necessary to pray fervently to God and place the selection of a new preacher in His hands.²⁹ Dr. Werner Janss Colombier and I were appointed to the position by a unanimous vote of the twenty-four brethren assembled. It was my forty-ninth year, and my soul was terrified and my mind disconcerted at the thought of the responsibility that was mine. I called upon the Lord to help me in this test, for I knew only through Him would I succeed in this calling. The following week found me so strained and so full of determination, both day and night, that I longed for Sunday to come. In this way I might discharge my duty and deliver what the Lord had worked upon me. For my first sermon, April 15, 1660, I chose to discuss the words of Micah 6:8. ["He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"]

²⁹ The selection of Gerhard Roosen and Dr. Colombier was made April 8, 1660. Dr. Colombier was to come from Emden with his wife for a year's appointment.

Dr. Colombier died of the plague on July 4, 1664, four years after he and Gerhard Roosen were installed as preachers in Altona. His widow went back to her former home in Emden but returned to our community when she married Carl de Vlieger, one of our members, in 1666.

May 1, 1660, Gerhard and four companions began a journey to Alkmaar and Amsterdam, preaching to Taufgesinnten at Emden, Huisduinen in de Syp, and Alkmaar as they went. Those accompanying him were Walch Paulsen from Saardam, Jan Janssen from Alkmaar, and the preacher Meyss Janssen. Meyss had baptized a young woman and three young men from our community on April 27. Gerhard Roosen completed his trip and returned to Hamburg by July 2.

Efforts had long been underway to reunite the Flemish Community and the Dompelaars. Pastor Bastiaan van Weenigem, of the Rotterdam Community, was especially active in this cause. He visited the Frisian Communities at Emden, Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck, Friedrichstadt, and Glückstadt while traveling with friends in 1661. During a stop in Lübeck he baptized ten young people. Two received baptism on May 26, and the remainder on June 2. Van Weenigem was speaking to the Flemish congregation in Altona against the teachings of the Dompelaars when he was loudly contradicted by someone in the audience. This inopportune outburst directly preceded the final break between the two factions.

Van Weenigem returned to Altona in 1663, and baptized six young people in Altona on July 11, soon after his arrival. The following day he installed Gerhard Roosen as a full-service preacher. While van Weenigem was a guest in the home of Gerhard Roosen, five Dompelaar preachers and deacons presented a statement of their principles and practices and requested he respond after careful consideration. In this manner a lengthy and significant correspondence began, furnishing van Weenigem with a basis for his book Methods.

of Baptism. This publication was released in Rotterdam in 1666. Some time later van Weenigem printed copies of seven out of the nine letters he had written to the Dompelaars up to the end of 1667. The correspondence ended abruptly in 1668 when the Dompelaar Johann Arents released an article titled "Eindelycke Verklaringe" ["Finally an Explanation"], and included in its appendix a condemnation of van Weenigem by Anthony de Gries. Prior to 1666, the Flemish Community had made what they considered a sincere gesture of reconciliation. They were willing to forgive and forget if the Dompelaars would (1) declare the old Flemish method of baptism adequate for any Christian, (2) confess they had been overly enthusiastic about baptism by immersion and beg forgiveness of those whom they had offended, and (3) acknowledge the teachings and practices of the Flemish Community to be in full accordance with the will of God. The Dompelaars, having made these admissions, would be prepared to live in harmony among the conservative members of the community. As might have been expected, these conditions were rejected. Another abortive attempt to heal the breach was made by the Evangelical Lutheran Provost and Principal Pastor. On November 5, 1670, the Dompelaars received a charter from King Christian V of Denmark granting them the right to practice their religion according to their own convictions.

A decline in membership in the Flemish Community, beginning in 1673, made it necessary to accept the temporary services of Separatist preachers. However, sixteen Dompelaars returned to our congregation between the years 1662 and 1698. Among them were Jan de Buyser and his wife, Jan Stockmann Isaacks (brother to Samuel), Helena de Gries, two women by the name of Hannchen de Voss, and Abraham Koopmann. In 1684 the Dompelaars were fortunate enough to secure the services of the distinguished preacher Jacob Denner (died in 1746). At this point the disagreement between the Flemish

Community and the Dompelaars was no longer a critical issue. Not only was Denner welcome to speak to our congregation, but a member of the Flemish Community by the name of Ernst Goverts built a chapel for Denner in 1708. This new building was close to Reichen Street on the Grosse Freiheit and replaced an old, dark, dilapidated house of worship. Because Denner had been a blue dyer in his youth, his chapel was known as the Blue Church. Here, in this modest building, noblemen often came to listen to Denner's famous sermons. It was ever Gerhard Roosen's deep but unfulfilled wish that Jacob Denner would see the error of his ways and return to the old traditions.

The Flemish Community was able to enjoy a few years of peace after the painful Dompelaar and Quaker problems had eased. However, some difficulty was experienced in finding a permanent preacher. Jacob de Vlieger Jacobs resigned his position in 1664, giving bad debts as the reason. Jacob had been born in the Hamburg area. After moving to Friedrichstadt in 1662, he was installed as a preacher there. He began to serve our congregation upon his return to Altona. Unfortunately, Jacob de Vlieger Jacobs became a convert to Calvinism after his resignation. Hilbrandt Harmens left his position as preacher June 5, 1665, and returned to Campen. He had been unable to earn a satisfactory living in Hamburg and Altona and "refused to accept charity." The community was no more successful in its selection of Jacob de Vlieger Symons, who was first elevated to the rank of deacon and then became a preacher February 26, 1665. After delivering only two sermons, he resigned. On September 20, 1668, the community welcomed Paulus Geerlings of Friedrichstadt with high hopes, but he died April 24, 1669.

The situation improved with the arrival of Romcke Gosling from Bolsward in Friesland. Gosling reached Altona on October 31, 1670, and was immediately called to serve. Ocke Pieters, who had been

born here, was installed as a preacher on December 26, 1671. Jan Sibes from Harlingen and Remmert Jacobs assumed their positions in 1676. Remmert died October 19, 1685, and Jan in January of 1691. Their deaths were a great loss to the community because their devotion to the service of the Lord was exemplary. The next two were chosen by lot from among four nominees in the Flemish Community. Jan de Lanoy, who had been born in Leiden, was installed to a full-service position by Dirck Morians from Saancyk on July 2, 1699. Paul Jansen Backer, born in Amsterdam, was held in high esteem by the congregation, but he left for Friedrichstadt in the fall of 1686 because of poor health. Backer returned to our community some years later and died here October 25, 1694. Prior to the selection of de Lanoy and Backer, the community once more became embroiled in doctrinal disagreements. To more clearly understand the basis of this difficulty, we must return to the Netherlands where the dispute first arose.

At the beginning of the movement, the various groups of Taufgesinnten considered themselves autonomous units. Somewhere near the middle of the seventeenth century, refugees from scattered areas converged in Hamburg and Altona and founded our community. Now it appeared this union would dissolve because of basic doctrinal issues. Dr. Galenus Abrahamss de Haan has been accused of being the instigator of this conflict. Galenus was an educated man, an eloquent speaker, and a popular doctor of medicine who served as a Mennonite preacher in Amsterdam between 1648 and 1706. Although strict with himself, it is said he had a mild disposition and related well to others. Galenus was a personal friend of two learned Collegiants and founded a similar lay fellowship in his own community. [The Collegiants adopted the spiritualistic rather than a rational approach to religion.] The first of Galenus' troubles concerned the Socinians [who held that the Holy Ghost was not an intrinsic member

of the Godhead but merely the power of God. Further, that Christ was by nature mortal and only by office divine.] Dutch authorities suspected Galenus of subscribing to the anti-Trinitarian doctrine of the Socinians, but exonerated him after thorough investigation. Galenus was not so easily disentangled from his next involvement. In 1657 Galenus and his colleague David Spruyt composed a list of nineteen articles challenging basic practices and beliefs of the Taufgesinnten. Some of the more pertinent issues are as follows:

- (1) Those who held ecclesiastical positions within the community were selected by well-meaning but uninspired members of the congregation.
- (2) All brethren in the faith should have equal authority to teach and to baptize.
- (3) Those who professed belief but had not been baptized should be permitted to participate in the Last Supper.
- (4) Emphasis was made as to the importance of thoroughly understanding the doctrines and responsibilities of membership in the community prior to baptism.
- (5) The Holy Scriptures alone were not sufficient basis upon which to found a new religion.
- (6) Celebration of the Lord's Supper should be observed in the home rather than the chapel.
- (7) Church discipline and punishment were ineffective as constituted.

Although these articles were written for the exclusive consideration of the Church Council, they were published the following year without the knowledge or consent of Galenus or Davis Spruyt. These nineteen articles caused such a furor that only the intercession of forty preachers averted a major breach. These representatives of Flemish, Frisian, and High German communities met together in June of 1660 in Leiden. After eight days of deliberation, they declared themselves united in support of the Word of God as the basis of community faith and belief. Among those who signed the report of the meetings, these men were affiliated with our community: Tobias Govertss van den Wyngaard from Amsterdam, Isaak Sneep and Boudewyn Doorn from Haarlem (formerly a preacher in Altona),

Meys Janssen from Huysduynen and a deputy of Saandam, Bastiaan van Weenigem from Rotterdam (chairman of the proceedings), and Reynier Staalwereln from Hoorn.

The next critical issue began in Amsterdam on Sunday, November 15, 1663. Samuel Apostool, a doctor of medicine and a colleague of Galenus de Hann, delivered a sermon based upon II Corinthians 7:1. ["Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."] Samuel Apostool interpreted the scripture to mean, "No man can be completely cleansed of his sins in this life. Final purification can only be accomplished through the righteousness of Christ and His act of atonement."

During the evening meeting, Galenus challenged the remarks of Apostool saying, "This is a teaching which incorporates the doctrine of predestination. It leads our people into transgression, and makes Christ a servant of evil. Those who rely solely upon Christ for their salvation will have their loins pierced as though by an Egyptian lance on the Day of Judgment." The Amsterdam Community found itself torn between the two interpretations. In May or June of 1663, three preachers--Samuel Apostool, Tobias Govertss van den Wyngaard, and Isaac van Breede--separated from the community taking 700 members with them. On the roof of the abandoned brewery they selected for a meeting house was a symbol of the sun and in the gable an inscription "Perfer et Obdura." (Bear and endure to the end!) From this time on, the splinter group was referred to as the Sun Community. Because the old church building carried a representation of a lamb, the parent community took the name of The Lamb.

Division of the Amsterdam Community assets was hotly disputed by the opposing groups, and city officials assumed control of the property to keep the peace. Final distribution of the holdings of

this wealthy community was made by civil authorities of Amsterdam in 1672.

When the majority of the communities of Taufgesinnten in the Netherlands became enmeshed in this dispute, approximately a hundred teachers and deacons gathered at Utrecht in September of 1664 in an attempt to restore harmony. The conference moved to Leiden in October, and it was here they announced unanimous support of the old Confessions. The decision of the delegates and five of the Confessions were published together under the title Het Oprecht Varbondt van Eenigheydt (In United Support of the Agreement). It was emphasized that the inclusion of the traditional Confessions was not meant to create a stronger bond among members, and it was not an attempt to raise these doctrinal statements to a position above the Holy Scriptures. The intent was to protect members from further distress and sorrow by guiding them safely down paths of Christian tolerance through true belief and love. Our congregation ratified the declaration adopted at Leiden and announced its support of the Sun Community.

Galenus Abrahamss de Haan approached our preacher Ocke Pieters on May 6, 1678, requesting permission to address our congregation. No one knew for sure whether Galenus meant to convert our community to his point of view, or if he wanted to contribute some thoughts to strengthen the testimony and faith of the members. The brethren were unable to come to an agreement as to how they should answer Galenus. Some wished to hear the famous preacher, while others argued that he should not be allowed to speak because of his attitude toward traditional doctrine. In an effort to arrive at a solution, Gerhard Roosen, Ocke Pieters, and deacon Hans Hermans (appointed in 1676) were sent on May 8 to question Galenus. Gerhard's report of the confrontation follows.

We explained to him freely how things were. We said we were sent by servants of the community not to examine him but to help him understand the community so he could make the correct decisions. After these remarks Galenus declared he was happy to participate in such a discussion and would frankly answer questions put to him. Afterward they could decide if they would grant him permission or find it necessary to refuse his request to speak to our congregation. These were the questions asked of Galenus.

1. "Do you believe water baptism was a directive and commandment of Christ for all those who are taught the holy gospel and believe in Him? Furthermore, that those who qualify under these provisions and who wish to be obedient servants to Jesus Christ should be granted baptism?" Galenus answered in the affirmative and pointed out there was never any question as to the necessity and validity of baptism in the true church. He also stated that his community performed the holy ordinance of baptism four times each year. Candidates for baptism received lengthy instruction and testing concerning Christian precepts and the fundamentals of belief before they were found worthy.

2. There had been rumors about the methods in which the ceremony of the Last Supper was observed in his community. For this reason the next question was asked. "Do you believe the Last Supper should be celebrated only by those who have a full knowledge of our beliefs and who have accepted baptism and are members of the community? Also, do you refrain from inviting any others to the table?" Galenus answered that no one would be acknowledged as a member of the community who had not accepted water baptism by one authorized to perform the ordinance. At an earlier time he had believed no one could rightfully be refused participation in the Last Supper. Galenus explained he had encouraged these people to seriously examine their hearts before entering into this ceremony. Furthermore, he was sure there could not have been more than three or four who chose to participate after deep reflection and who had subsequently refused baptism or had never returned.

3. It was believed Galenus doubted the divine nature of Christ, therefore we asked this question. "Do you believe and confess the Lord Christ is the Son of God through whom everything was created, who was from the

beginning with the Father and is one with Him?" Galenus replied that he believed in God the Father and in His Son through whom all was created. He further confessed his belief in Christ as the first born of all creatures, that He was a true son of the Father and the Father was a true father to the Son. However, he pointed out the Father stood above the Son, and the Son was in the image of His Father. He said Christ, as an exact image of the eternal, godly spirit of the Father, did not originate at the time of His conception, nor with His birth from Mary, but the Lord Christ existed with the Father from the beginning, before the creation of this present and visible world.

4. Our final question was posed in this manner. "Do you consider the Confessions of the Taufgesinnten, which codify the fundamentals of our religion, as unnecessary? Do you really think we who lived near the place where Menno Simons lived, taught, and died would hastily assemble invalid and strange beliefs?" Galenus agreed we would not commit such an act, but in his opinion the Confessions were too severe and would tend to bind people more to them than to the Holy Scriptures. He did not reject the Confessions in so far as they were accepted as guidelines for general conduct subject to the Holy Scriptures, which must always supercede any other rules. In his opinion each man should be permitted to exercise his own judgment in the use of these Confessions. Galenus also noted that of all the writings of mankind the Confessions of the Taufgesinnten stood next to the Holy Scriptures.

After examining the responses to the questions posed by their deputies, the Church Council granted Galenus permission to occupy the pulpit provided he agreed to certain restrictions. He must follow Flemish Community procedures in addressing the congregation. He was to pray in silence, avoid controversial topics, and advocate only those actions leading to a more righteous behavior on the part of the members. Galenus not only consented to these conditions but during his sermon confessed he had become much wiser since the division of the Sun and the Lamb Communities. He voiced his deep regret that some of his impulsive acts might have contributed to the conflict, and sincerely wished events could have been other

than they were. Galenus preached on Ascension Day, on several of the following Sundays, and on three Whitsun Days. Church records indicate that all who heard his sermons were well satisfied. This report was signed by Gerhard Roosen and those preachers and deacons who had been part of the attending congregation.

During his return trip to Holland, Galenus received a letter from the Society of South Holland, dated June 11, requesting his services in resolving a conflict between the Groningen Community and their teacher M. A. Spinniker.³⁰

Dissension among members of our community soon arose again over teachings of a preacher Hinrich Teuniss from Harlingen in Friesland. Teuniss had declined the first invitation from the Flemish Community to serve in 1688. The following year he consented to the appointment on a trial basis, but was abruptly dismissed when he began to speak about many 'strange things'. The suspension was strongly protested by some members of the congregation. However, calm discussion among the brethren avoided further conflict. Teuniss returned to the Netherlands, but was a guest preacher in Altona at the time of his death in 1693.

Four years later, in May of 1697, Riewert Dirks came to Altona with his family to accept the position of community preacher. Dirks was not entirely unknown before this appointment. He had spoken to our congregation on several occasions, and had also baptized some of our members while serving as a preacher at Molkwerum, Friesland. However, soon after Dirks' arrival, the community began to suspect he was teaching doctrines not in support of the divine nature of Christ. Feelings became so inflamed over this issue that Dirks chose to resign in August of the same year. Unfortunately,

³⁰ See the inventory of the Amsterdam Community Archive holdings, I. p. 147.

his decision to leave could not entirely correct the damage done. The community had become wary of preachers not reared in Hamburg or Altona, and when Pastor Matthias Diepenbrook of Haarlem visited our congregation, he was not invited to speak. This ultraconservative attitude, on the part of some of the brethren, soon threatened to be the cause of another division, according to Gerhard Roosen's notes. A compromise was finally reached November 20, 1699 [1697]. The agreement, as written by Gerhard Roosen and signed by those involved, proposed that preachers from outside the community not be asked to serve on a permanent basis until they declared their intentions to accept and abide by the old Confessions included in the Leiden report, In United Support of the Agreement. There would be a few occasions when endorsement of these articles would not be necessary. For example a visiting preacher would be told the community preferred to abide by the traditional Confessions of the Taufgesinnten. If the outsider agreed to conform to this restriction, he would be granted permission to address the congregation. If, on the other hand, the brethren sensed some reservation, the preacher would be refused. It was further concluded, to maintain peace and unity in the community, the deacons and preachers should pledge themselves to sustain this decision, and all members should more conscientiously observe the old Confessions.

Neither good intentions nor pledges were sufficient to avert conflicts continuing well into the next century. The brilliant preacher Jan de Lanoy tended to favor the progressive Lamb Community point of view, while the other three preachers--Gerhard Roosen, Pieter Verhelle, and Jacobus Cornelius von Campen--gave full support to traditional Confessions. Pieter Verhelle, a very eloquent speaker, arrived from Haarlem in October of 1693, and was appointed in February, 1694. He quickly established close personal and professional relationships with Gerhard Roosen, who was senior preacher

at this time. Verhelle married Gerhard's daughter [Sarah, widow of Herman Goverts], and Gerhard included one of his son-in-law's excellent sermons in the appendix of his little book Accusations and Innocence of the Evangelical Taufgesinnten Christians, Known as Mennonites. Pieter Verhelle and Jan de Lanoy were ordained together in 1699. Jacobus Cornelius von Campen had arrived from Haarlem in the month of July, 1698. He was installed as a full-service preacher at the same time Verhelle and de Lanoy were ordained. Once given authority behind the pulpit, this controversial figure proved a powerful antagonist against de Lanoy.

Antoinette Bourignon, leader of a mysterious religious sect, must be mentioned. Dirck Boudt, baptized a member of our community in 1673, joined her disreputable group in 1676. However, after two or three years he realized his mistake and returned to our congregation. Claes Flores, baptized in 1653, was not as fortunate. In 1679, after twenty-four years of marriage, he left his wife and joined Antoinette and her disciples on the north beach of Schleswig Island. Because Flores donated all his worldly goods to Antoinette, he found it necessary to take out papers identifying himself as a destitute farm laborer. Flores did not live long enough to repent and make amends. He died toward the end of 1679, the same year he joined the strange sect, or the first part of the following year.

As is quite obvious from the foregoing accounts, the second half of the seventeenth century was a difficult period for our community. Church records reflect contentions and struggles through the numerous cases of temporary or permanent expulsions from the Mennonite Community. Causes cited for such extreme measures included drunkenness, fights, and immoral conduct. However, we must remember cities of those early times were small and confining, and our rules of conduct were much more strict than they are at present. Living in close proximity with one's neighbors, it was difficult

to hide minor infractions. Under the circumstances it is not for us to judge these people too harshly least we be guilty of hypocrisy. There is sufficient cause for us to mourn our own failings. We should humble ourselves before God and beg His forgiveness for the indifference shown by some of our members, for their lack of earnest endeavor, and for their transgressions. Still, in all modesty, we can say our conduct, in general, appears to have improved since those early days when too many members contributed to discord, waywardness, and immorality plaguing the community.

Thanks to the Lord, this chapter in our history was not entirely negative. There were reasons for giving thanks and times of rejoicing. The building of a new chapel on the site of the previous meeting house on the Grosse Freiheit was one of these memorable occasions. By 1672 the growth of our congregation necessitated the building of a chapel to replace the inadequate, remodeled house behind the Roosen home that had been in use. (There were approximately 250 baptized members by 1676. This count does not include those under the age of 17.) How the necessary funds were gathered is described in the following lines, hung on the wall of the church vestibule as a faith-promoting reminder.³¹

A new church would we build in place of the old,
 So in love and trust, met we within the fold.
 Of the increase to our Greenland fishermen,
 Half a tenth was freely pledged by them,
 For the oncoming year. Then gave the Lord,
 No man can believe so great a horde!
 To forty-eight ships on the Elbe He brought,
 Six-hundred great whales, and most were caught.
 Praise to our God! Our thanks we show.
 He brings His blessings; His goodness all know.

³¹ The original verses were written in Dutch because this was the common language of the community. It was not until near the end of the eighteenth century that German gradually began to come into use. By the beginning of the nineteenth, it was introduced into religious services.

Assessments levied in 1673; building begun in 1674.
Completion and first services in 1675.

In those places where love is most dear,
And trust without question lingers near,
There can harmony and peace be found,
In house, church, and land blessings abound.
Self love and vain honor ever cast out,
Together with discouragement and doubt.
In home and church are these poisons worst,
They are ways and works by Satan most cursed.

The following lines concerning the life and attitudes of Gerhard Roosen were composed by him and preceded the text cited above.

The master builder of this chapel,
And supervisor of the work,
1612 was the year of his birth;
Became he then a first-born heir,
1640 was the year of his marriage;
As a preacher, stood first in the community
1660-1663.

Through it all, gave he praise to the Lord,
To Him alone is all praise and honor.
By His mercy and grace,
All blessings come and are bestowed.

Construction of the chapel was begun in 1674, and by March 14 of the next year, Ocke Pieters was able to conduct the first sermon. The scripture he selected for the occasion was from Psalms 122:6, 7. ["Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within they palaces."] Andreas Linnich was the first of three baptized by Gerhard Roosen in the chapel, April 1, 1675. The community bought the plot on which the building stood from Kord Roosen, Gerhard's brother, on January 18, 1676.³² It is regretable that we do not know the name of the Greenland fishermen whose generous donations made this chapel a reality. It is assumed most of them belonged to the families Goverts,

³² The chapel built between 1674 and 1675 was burned to the ground by Swedish troops in 1713.

de Vlieger, and Roosen. While these three were considered most prosperous, members of the Goverts family were particularly outstanding in the general conduct of their lives. Not less than five served as deacons during the last half of the seventeenth century, and only one by the name of Goverts was charged with a moral transgression. Of all those in our community who were involved with the Greenland expeditions, Carl de Vlieger was the most wealthy and influential. In 1681 he became a ship owner and married Gerhard Roosen's daughter. [Carl married Ester Roosen, September 11, 1681.] Considering the important parts the Goverts and de Vlieger families played in our history, it is surprising that these names are no longer found in our community. Members of the Goverts family joined either the Lutheran or the Reformed Church by the middle of the eighteenth century, and there were no more male heirs to carry on the de Vlieger name by the beginning of the nineteenth.

This was not the case with the van der Smissen family whose members have participated in community affairs up to the present. The first to join our congregation was Gysbert II, son of Daniel van der Smissen. Gysbert married Anna de Vlieger on July 22, 1677, and took her to his home in Glückstadt. Five years later, in 1682, the couple returned and opened a bakery on Elbe Street in Altona. From then until his death, January 22, 1685, Gysbert retained membership in our community. His son Hinrich van der Smissen I apparently inherited Gysbert's ambition, for he, too, became a man of wealth and position. Gysbert's daughter Cattalina married Pieter van Sintern in 1693.

Until 1678, families of the Flemish Community buried their dead in the cemetery owned by the Reformed Church in Altona. At this time it was decided the community should acquire a graveyard of their own. The most generous contributor toward this project was the deacon Herman Goverts who donated half his property. Gerhard

Roosen was assigned to manage the undertaking because of his administrative ability. This burial ground can still be seen on Rosen Street, but it has not been used for many years.

All through the latter part of the seventeenth century, the Hamburg Mennonites won an ever-increasing amount of respect from those among whom they lived and worked. This is substantiated by concessions made to these early conscientious objectors during the time the Danes besieged the city in 1686. Not only was their refusal to bear arms respected, but they were allowed to hold religious services without retaliation. In place of military duty, the Taufgesinnten were assigned to man the water brigade. Assembling on the sidewalk by the swine market, they alternated with seamen who were not permanent citizens. The duties of this group consisted in watching for and putting out fires caused by enemy bombs catapulted into the city.

Having achieved a release from compulsory military duty, the Taufgesinnten next turned their attention toward obtaining an official release from taking oaths. Hamburg officials granted this additional concession February 7, 1690, in response to a petition. From this date on, members of the community could declare possession of ships and other taxable goods by the use of the phrase "By men's truth." On January 24, 1694, this privilege was extended to include all legal transactions.

By 1699 the community was permitted to have a footpath behind Reeper Road paved so they could more easily walk to church in Altona. This route crossed Hamburg Berg and was especially treacherous during inclement weather. [The German word 'Berg' may be translated as mountain or hill. Because there are no significant land elevations in the vicinity, another reason for the use of this designation must be sought. Maps of Hamburg for 1650 indicate the Taufgesinnten crossed a western wall or embankment, designed as part of the city's

fortification, in order to reach Altona.] When finished, the walk became known as the Klütjenstieg or clod stairs. This term was derived from the Mennonite proclivity for clinging together in times of adversity, just as soil of the fields forms clods by clumping together.

In Gerhard Roosen's detailed notes, attention is paid to the close relationship existing among the various communities of Taufgesinnten during the seventeenth century, in spite of the considerable distance between them. This chapter would not be complete, therefore, without some mention of the interchange of members that took place. Gerhard Roosen began keeping records and comments in 1650, and continued until he reached the age of 88, when failing eyesight forced him to stop. [Because Gerhard was born in 1612, we can conclude his records spanned a period of 50 years.] It is from these valuable records we learn no less than 77 young people came to Hamburg and Altona to be baptized during the second half of the 17th century. Of these, 20 came from Lübeck, 13 from Danzig, 9 from Friedrichstadt, 9 from the Netherlands, 6 from Glückstadt, 5 from Elbing in West Prussia, 4 from East Friesland, 2 from England, 2 from Copenhagen, 1 from the Pfalz [Palatinate],³³ and the remainder from Eiderstädt and Ovendorp. Of 122 members who came from sister communities with their sponsors, some established permanent residence in Hamburg or Altona while others, such as sailors and craftsmen, remained only a short time. Among those included in this listing, 52 were from the Netherlands, 22 from Danzig, 14 from Emden, 13 from Friedrichstadt, 8 from Glückstadt, 4 from the Pfalz,³⁴ 4 from

³³ Heinrich Kasel came from the Pfalz, or Palatinate, and was baptized September 29, 1694.

³⁴ Daniel Krevenbüll (Krebbiel) and Caspar Wever (Weber) came from Haarlem with their certificates on November 11, 1693. Johann Kasel, whose father was a preacher in the Pfalz, arrived in October

Lübeck, 2 from Tönnigen, 1 from Copenhagen, and 1 from Elsass.

[There appears to be one unaccounted for.]

Preachers from distant communities endured the difficulties of travel in order to speak to our congregation. Between 1660 and 1699, those who came to serve in the holy rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper were listed in our old church book or in Gerhard Roosen's notes. They included Meyss Janssen from Sardam, Jan Janssen from Alkmaar, Walch Paulsen from Saandam, Bastian van Weenigem from Rotterdam, Jan Sievers from Emden, Gerrit Jansen from Friedrichstadt, Jacob Oertz from Harlingen, Heert Jansen from Emden, Jan Sibes Pottebacker from Harlingen, Hendrik Tappes from Hindelopen, Remmert Jacobs (residence unknown), Galenus Abrahamss de Haan from Amsterdam, Thomas Sneep from Haarlem, Abraham van Beusicom van de Goes from Seeland, Abraham van Dulcken from Utrecht, Pieter Beets from Amsterdam, Upe Hessels from Hindelopen, Foecke Floris from Surhuisterveen, Johannes Abrahamss from Norden, Pieter Abbes from Holswerp, Henrik Ariaans from Franecker, Paul Jansen from Friedrichstadt, Hendrik Teunis from Harlingen, Jan Jacobs from Friesland, Riewert Dirks and Abbe Reyners from Molkwerum, Dirck Aerts from Friedrichstadt, Simon Teunis and Jacob Cornelius from Holland,

of 1694 with a certificate from Neuwied and a sponsor of his father's by the name of Johann Lohrer. During the years 1671, 1690, and those immediately following, many fled from the oppressions of Louis XIV [Sun King of France]. Heinrich Cassel, father of Johann Kasel, came from Görlisheim (Gerolsheim?), where he wrote "An Expose' of the Quakers or Shakers." His work was based upon personal observations at Kriesheim (Kirchheim?). (On page 103 of William Penn's publication "An Account of W. Penn's Travails, etc., 1677," we read of a place called Chrisheim located about six English miles from Worms.) With deep regret, Casel notes a few of his own blood joined the Quakers and disputed against those who remained faithful to the Taufgesinnten. In Amsterdam in 1678, Johannes Claus of Strassburg published a refutation of Casel's work titled "The Exposer Exposed."

and Dirck Symons Moriaans from Sanndyk. This accounts for the thirty preachers who visited our community in some capacity during this thirty-six year period. Many of these men made repeated trips, and some remained with us long enough to deliver sermons on six successive Sundays. Some preachers who visited us were not named because they performed no particular service during their stay.

Just as preachers from other communities came to Altona in a guest capacity, so Gerhard Roosen made frequent and extensive trips outside our community. These were accomplished with some sacrifice as he had to neglect his secular affairs during these absences. In 1665 and 1670, Gerhard spent two months each summer in Friesland and Holland preaching to congregations. During 1671 and 1672, he spoke a number of times in Friedrichstadt and Glückstadt. He spent almost three months of 1673 visiting thirteen communities in Holland, Friesland, and East Friesland. In some instances he preached as many as four times to a single congregation. Gerhard performed baptisms and celebrated the Last Supper in Friedrichstadt in 1674. His 1676 journey was the longest and perhaps his last. In July of that year, the preachers Remmert Jacobs and Jan Sibes Pottebacker came to Altona where they spoke on three Sundays and two weekdays. Following their installation of Ocke Pieters to a full-service position, the two joined Gerhard Roosen and Jacob de Vlieger Symons in a visit to Lübeck. From there Jan Sibes Pottebaker and Gerhard proceeded on alone to all West-Prussian communities from Danzig to Poland. The pair performed ceremonies and preached in Oorlof, Nieschefky, Montau, Kassouf, Lunau (Gerhard baptized nine candidates here), Markushof, and Danzig. This extensive trip would certainly have been most arduous as these were small, lonely clusters of Taufgesinnten enduring severe hardships. At the same time, it must have been an inspirational and faith-promoting experience to observe the steadfast dedication of these people.

During this period our congregation provided comfort and aid to distant brethren in the faith. A copy of a letter from the Community of the Lamb in Amsterdam, dated April 12, 1690, can be found in their archives. This letter was written in response to our inquiry of January 21, 1690, concerning measures being taken to help needy members in the Pfalz. There is no further information about this particular incident.

CHAPTER V

The Difficult Years, from 1700 to 1714

The first fourteen years of the eighteenth century proved to be the most distressing and difficult period in the history of our community. In addition to the bitter conflicts within our ranks, resisting all attempts to negotiate compromises, events outside our control threatened the existence of the community.

In March and April of 1700, several of our families emigrated to Pennsylvania. Among them were Herman Karsdorp, the younger, his wife Adriantje de Voss, and their children; Hinrich van Sintern; Isaac van Sintern, his wife Neeltje Claesen from Amsterdam, and their children; and Paul Roosen and his wife Anna Harmens. Paul returned to our community with his family at a later date, but then moved to Russia. In 1726, Paul's wife once again joined the Altona congregation. [Because Paul is not mentioned, we assume Anna was then a widow.] Tryntje Hermens, a widow who had formerly belonged to the Housebuyer Community, and Klaas Beerends also emigrated to North America. Klaas was listed in our church records, together with his wife Tryntje, as Claas Barents from Friedrichstadt. A year after Beerends' departure, he wrote the Church Council for advice concerning the colony's difficulty in finding a preacher who could perform necessary holy ordinances. Four preachers from the Flemish Community answered in March of 1702, expressing their opinion that an exception to church policy would have to be made. To support this decision, reference was made to the Bible and the baptisms performed by Phillip when he was only a deacon (Acts 8:12-16).

As difficult as it was for the community to lose members through emigration, the open conflict between the preachers Jan de Lanoy and Jacobus Cornelius von Campen posed a far greater threat to the continuation of the community. The venerable Gerhard Roosen laid aside total responsibility for community affairs when he reached his ninetieth birthday in 1702. From this time on, each of our preachers would take his turn in carrying the burden. Because of the dissension among our members, Gerhard also asked to be released from the Church Council by the end of 1703, but the brethren serving on this committee urged him to retain this single position. Their argument was, "Servants of the Lord should strive to the utmost of their ability to maintain the peace, harmony, and contentment of the Father." Quarreling continued until September 20, 1705, when a settlement was finally reached with the help of preachers Pieter Beets and Herman Reynskes from Amsterdam. The conciliatory agreement contained word-for-word excerpts from the peace pact written by Gerhard Roosen and endorsed on November 20, 1697. Formal presentation and reading of the agreement to the congregation took place Sunday afternoon, following the morning's baptismal ceremonies. Upon the acceptance of the assembly, the document was signed by those who had been writing abusive remarks against one and other, by four preachers from our community, two visiting preachers, seven deacons, and by representatives acting on behalf of the general membership. Less than two weeks later, on October 1, 1705, Gerhard Roosen and Salomon de Vlieger were appointed to the Presidency of the Church Council for a period of six months. Salomon served slightly more than three weeks before his death on October 23. He had been a deacon in the Mennonite Community since February 25, 1703.

Unfortunately, the period of truce was extremely brief. In all probability the reason this act of reconciliation did not result in harmony and unity among members was due to the great divergence

of opinion held by the several preachers serving our community. This surmise is supported by an examination of minutes recorded October 1, wherein mistakes made by the Church Committee and their subsequent affect on the congregation were discussed. It is painful to compare the disunity among members of our congregation in the year 1705 with the peace and harmony enjoyed in 1664. The following verses were composed to commemorate the dedication of our chapel that year, and well express the attitudes of the community at that time.

In those places where love is most dear,
And trust without question lingers near,
There can harmony and peace be found,
In house, church, and land, blessings abound.
Self love and vain honor ever cast out,
Together with discouragement and doubt.
In home and church are these poisons worst,
They are ways and works by Satan most cursed.

It had been a disheartening period of thirty years since Galenus Abrahamss de Haan first disrupted the community with his nineteen articles challenging doctrine and practices of the Taufgesinnten. Not until the death of Jan de Lanoy, in 1722, was dissension eliminated. How could a sincere peace prevail when, from the sanctity of the pulpit, one preacher challenged the words of another concerning the fundamentals of eternal salvation? As we have seen, the aging Gerhard Roosen tried to bring about a reconciliation, but he was handicapped by his determination that the community should follow only traditional practices and doctrines.

At the request of Gerhard Roosen, the earnest and righteous Dompelaar preacher Jacob Denner was invited to speak to our congregation. Before he spoke, however, Denner was cautioned not to discuss baptismal ceremonies different from those practiced by the Mennonite Community. At the time of the invitation, July 2, 1701, Jacob Denner was serving the Flemish and High German Community in Danzig.

Up to this time, it had not been the custom of the Mennonites to pay their preachers a salary. However, a few such as Pieter Verhelle received partial payment for their services. The attitude of the community toward formal education was summed up in Gerhard Roosen's book Accusations and Innocence of the Evangelical Taufgesinnten Christians, Known as Mennonites. He states:

Just because our preachers have not studied throughout their youth and have no knowledge of Latin, much less any of the other ancient languages in which the Holy Scriptures were originally written, there is no reason to repudiate study where fundamental learning can be achieved, provided there is no other purpose than preparation to support and preside over the Church of Jesus Christ in all humility and fear of God. On the other hand, we deny the premise that the only way to gain a genuine knowledge of God is through fluency in many languages and proficiency in academic studies.

The first preacher in our community who seriously undertook theological studies was Hinrich Teunis de Jager. Recommended by Gerhard Roosen shortly before his death, de Jager became a preacher July 12, 1711, while still very young. He was ordained to full service in our community July 29, 1720, promising on this occasion, "To keep God's word and our Confessions." De Jager was a very solemn, dedicated, and capable preacher who thought long and earnestly before accepting a full-service commitment.

Jan Stockmann had been elevated to the position of preacher in 1711, along with de Jager, but he died on September 27, 1713, during the time plague was raging throughout Europe. Jan Gerling and Jan Janssen de Voss had been elected deacons in 1706, and were called to be preachers March 24, 1712. Gerling died in 1734, and de Voss in 1716. Gerhard Roosen was 99 years and 8 months of age at the time of his death on November 20, 1711. The fact that 193 pairs of mourners walked in his funeral procession attested to the love and admiration our people had for this devoted servant of the Lord.

After the death of de Lanoy [in 1722], the community elected to positions of ecclesiastical authority only those who supported the beliefs of the early Taufgesinnten. In this way they eliminated the basic cause of many of our internal conflicts. Because our congregation preferred to follow the old, traditional ways, its members were expected to marry within their faith. Those who violated this rule, up to the eighteenth century, were temporarily excommunicated. The first exception to this practice, as far as we know, involved the marriage of Lücke Hingsberg and Symon Nickel. The bride was a member of our community and the groom belonged to the Reformed Church in Friedrichstadt. Permission for the interdenominational marriage was given on the provision that the husband Symon Nickel would attend Mennonite services with his wife and would refuse infant baptism for his children.

Community rules strictly prohibited the bearing of arms. This is well illustrated by the fact that in 1712 Lorenz Kramer was ordered to sell his ship because there were guns mounted on it (probably as a defense against pirates who were active during this period). Furthermore, the captain Hinrich van der Smissen was forbidden to set sail in the offending vessel.

The first years of the eighteenth century proved most critical in our survival. Not only was there internal strife, but wars between nations raged around our community and exacted its toll of suffering and privation from our members. The basis of this conflict was a grand design for conquest perpetrated by Peter the Great of Russia, Friedrich IV of Denmark, and Friedrich August I, the Electorate of Saxony and King of Poland. The first step of the plan was for the Czar and Friedrich August I to seize Swedish border territory to the south and east of the Baltic Sea. Success in this joint venture appeared excellent due to the youth and inexperience of the Swedish King, Charles XII. At the same time these two monarchs were

invading Sweden, Denmark's King Friedrich IV would keep young Duke Friedrich IV of Holstein-Gottorp engaged. Duke Friedrich was not only politically committed to Sweden but the royal families had kinship ties. In return for the cooperation of Friedrich IV of Denmark, the sovereign states of Russia, Saxony, and Poland would support Denmark's claim to Norway by right of conquest. This campaign of aggression lasted twenty years and brought unending misery. While it is true that Denmark was involved in only two military actions, both were terrible episodes. In 1700, Danish forces attacked the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, and Charles XII of Sweden immediately opened a second front by sailing across the sound to besiege Copenhagen. This Danish city would surely have been lost if her king had not signed a treaty with Duke Friedrich on August 18, 1700, at the castle of Travendahl. As part of the agreement, Duke Friedrich IV of Holstein-Gottorp guaranteed Charles XII of Sweden would vacate the Island of Sjaelland where Copenhagen lay. Sweden's king objected violently, and it was under the strongest protest that he honored the terms of the pact. While the military forces under Charles XII were prohibited from remaining on Sjaelland, nothing had been said about assault against possessions outside Denmark proper. Therefore, Charles XII immediately ordered General Gyllensthjerna to attack Altona. It may be recalled that ownership of Altona had reverted to Denmark with the death of the last male heir to the Schauenberg line in 1640. General Gyllensthjerna confronted the officials of Altona and demanded a compensatory contribution of 50,000 thaler for the abortive Sjaelland campaign or his troops would burn the city to the ground.

As soon as the first antagonist succeeded in exacting its toll from the helpless populace of Altona, a second came forth to make its demands. On August 28, Duke Friedrich IV of Holstein-Gottorp assessed the Mennonites 800 thaler. This money, to be gathered by

mortgaging church buildings and grounds, would be due in two weeks. Our community was unable to raise the required amount in the time allotted, and ominous threats were made by the Duke on September 13, 1700, and again on March 7, 1701. We must assume the money was eventually collected because no reprisals were taken.

A second and more crushing war period began in 1709 and ended in 1713. During the winter of 1708 and 1709--one of the coldest of the century--Charles XII of Sweden made a senseless march against Russia. The Swedish troops suffered horribly, but endured in an heroic manner, and through their hardships became strongly united. In assessing the condition of his men, Charles XII mistook high morale for strength and, against the advice of his generals, proceeded to attack the fortress of Poltawa [Poltava in east-central Ukraine]. His small army displayed unbelievable bravery, but the battle was lost July 8, 1709, and the Swedish survivors escaped to Turkey. To the Danish King, this appeared an opportune time to attack Sweden, and he ordered his troops to begin an invasion. With its army defeated and the country's future at stake, Sweden's General Stenbock faced a crisis of monumental proportions. On February 28, 1710, he called armed farmers together to hold a defensive line at Helsingborg. In an amazing show of valor, these conscript peasants saved their homeland and drove the Danes from their shores. This resumption of hostilities between Denmark and Sweden would result in untold anguish for the inhabitants of Altona three years later.

In 1711, Denmark was caught up in a dispute between Altona and Hamburg. The citizens of Altona complained Hamburg was confiscating their goods. To support this allegation, a well-known merchant by the name of Hinrich van der Smissen made a complete report of wares unlawfully retained through the years 1698 to 1711. Counter charges by Hamburg citizens largely concerned the activities of one Johann Peter Flügge. Jacob Denner had baptized this

former member of the Lutheran Church in Altona's Pond of the Thieves in 1701. Although Flügge had been punished for proselyting in Hamburg after his baptism, it was because of bad debts that civil authorities eventually forced him to leave the city. August 5, 1711, Denmark sent an army of 28,000 to restore and maintain peace. While the troops were successful in averting open hostilities between Altona and Hamburg, they brought with them the dreaded plague. This terrible scourge spread rapidly throughout all Holstein.

Three months later, on November 1, 1711, a devastating fire consumed the length and breadth of the city of Altona. In the face of this disaster, inhabitants of Hamburg set aside past grudges to aid the many homeless families.

Through good times and bad, the war taxes continued. The Mennonites made a voluntary donation of 600 thaler in 1710, but it was considered insufficient and a tax of 1,000 thaler was imposed. Their petitions for redress of August 5 and October 13, 1710, were refused, and the community was forced to mortgage their houses for the poor in order to meet the assessment. But worse was yet to come. In 1712, war with Sweden flamed anew and the Lord Mayor of Pinneberg taxed the Mennonite Community of Altona another 1,000 thaler. Payment of the second assessment proved even more difficult, and representatives once again petitioned Denmark to release them from the tax. They pointed out that thirty of the community's families were in extreme need and without shelter since the November fire. Furthermore, members in Hamburg refused to help raise the money. Mennonites living in Hamburg composed two-thirds of the congregation and had been of inestimable aid in collecting the first 1,000-thaler tax. This obligation had been undertaken willingly even though the closing of the Hamburg gates had deprived them of the services of their preachers and had drastically curtailed their trade-based income. Now, however, the Hamburg members feared there

would be no end to the taxing of their Altona brethren if all demands were met in full. But neither this nor the following petitions were honored.

Authorities from Pinneberg collected a 400-thaler payment from our members in Altona on October 27, 1712, and began billeting Danish troops on Executions Way. Each Mennonite household was assigned one minor officer and two to four common soldiers, according to each family's ability to provide for the unwelcome boarders. On November 4, Mennonite deputies renewed and were denied their petition for release from the remainder of the 1,000-thaler war tax. The Hamburg members relented at this point and donated toward the final payment that was exacted by force in February of 1713.

In 1712, prior to payment of the last installment, Danish troops quartered in Holstein crossed the Elbe River and attacked Swedish possessions in the Bremen and Verden areas. Infuriated by the audacity of Sweden's ancient Scandinavian enemy, General Stenbock ignored Russian and Saxon troops to launch a counteroffensive against the Danes. So savage was this assault that 8,400 Swedes were able to defeat an army of 20,000. This decisive battle took place at Gadebusch in Mecklenburg and forced the Danes to retreat to their original positions in Holstein.

In the beginning of January, news of the Danish rout and approach of Swedish troops caused many Altona families to flee to Hamburg for safety. Upon his arrival in Pinneberg, General Stenbock demanded a contribution of 100,000 thaler from Altona in recompense for a fort-city burned by the Danes during their recent foray across the Elbe. Should Altona refuse payment, the city would be similarly destroyed by fire. A futile attempt to negotiate a compromise was made by a special commission from Altona, which included Johann Peter Flügge. Swedish interests were represented by a benevolent

officer named von Bassewitz, but final rejection or acceptance of the terms was the prerogative of the General who entered Altona in a carriage drawn by a span of four horses. Neither the counteroffer of 50,000 thaler nor the pleas of Pastor Sass and others altered Stenbock's determination to destroy Altona by fire or bankruptcy. Between 10 and 11 o'clock on Sunday evening, January 8, 1713, the burning began. First from the southern sector and then from the northern, street by street and almost house by house, Altona was put to the torch. It is virtually impossible to describe the screams, terror, and anguish of the inhabitants as they watched all they owned disappear in flames and smoke. It was midwinter and only 693 of 1,546 dwellings in Altona remained habitable when the fire had spent itself. While the Mennonite church and adjacent buildings lay in ashes, the Dompelaar chapel, built on the Grosse Freiheit in 1708, survived. It was fortunate for the community that Jacob Denner, a Dompelaar preacher quite acceptable by Mennonite standards, served in Friedrichstadt through the years 1713 to 1715 and was willing to conduct services in Altona until a new little house of worship could be built. Religious needs not met in the Dompelaar chapel were observed in an unused section of a grainery on the Hamburg waterfront. This was not the only time Mennonites found it expedient to meet together in a harbor warehouse. In 1700, during an earlier Danish seige, the city gates of Hamburg were officially closed but members of the congregation were permitted to hold services on the waterfront. The embankment gates were opened again in 1712, during the time of the plague, allowing Hamburg Mennonites to attend Whitsun services in Altona.

The plague brought to Hamburg and Altona by Swedish soldiers in 1713 did not spare the Mennonite Community. The disease took eleven of our members that year. Because of the destruction of Altona, restrictions against Mennonite services in Hamburg relaxed

somewhat. However, congregational singing was forbidden throughout the years of the plague due to objections of leading Lutheran ministers. Then on October 2, 1716, an order was issued restraining the community from holding any further meetings on the waterfront.

The plague struck our congregation with renewed force during the months of September and October in 1716. Because the entrance to our cemetery in Altona was located behind a Danish guardpost, six of our members were buried in various Hamburg graveyards. Two of these were buried in a plot specifically designated for victims of the disease by the Hamburg City Council. According to our church records, this site was near an oil mill on the Field of the Holy Ghost. Known as Ölndhlenkirchhof, the cemetery remained in the possession of the community until 1840. By this time only Separatists were being buried there, and the community felt it unwise to assume the expense of replacing the neglected wooden fence surrounding the area. Skeletons that could be recovered were moved to a new graveyard and the property was turned back to the City Council.

The fires of 1711 and 1713, combined with the multiple war taxes, left our community in poor circumstances. The records do not tell us how much property was lost to our members in the two great fires. We do know two breweries owned by Hinrich van der Smissen, an affluent Mennonite, were destroyed in 1711. These reconstructed buildings and eighteen of his houses, near the Elbe Bridge, were burned in 1713. According to previous tax evaluations, these holdings alone amounted to 50,000 thaler. The Roosen home at the corner of Bleicher and Rosen Streets was burned, although it was said this building might have survived if the owner had not abandoned it because the largest de Voss brewery and one owned by Peter de Voss, Jr., were not destroyed. In reconstructing events the following two accounts will demonstrate how careful an historian must be not to

accept rumor. The more fanciful version of the story is that workers in the de Voss brewery drove the Swedish soldiers off before they could set fire to the building. In all probability the more accurate explanation is that workers invited the soldiers in and filled them with beer. Friendly relations having been secured by a gift from the hops, the Swedes spared the brewery and turned elsewhere with their torches.³⁵

Two interesting reports exist concerning the Separatists who were buried in one section of the Mennonite cemetery in Altona. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a certain Olinger Pauli claimed to have been chosen by the kings of Palestine to found a new religion with Jehovah at the head. Olinger had the advantage of being the son of a famous doctor of medicine who served as personal physician to three Danish kings. Olinger's first attempt to gain converts took place in Amsterdam, but he was confined to a house of correction for his efforts. Upon his release, Olinger returned to his native land. His next move was to organize the First Apostolic Community for pagans and Jews (meaning Israelites and non-Israelites) in Altona. After gaining some followers, he made a written proposal to the Mennonite Community suggesting a coalition. This document was returned through a notary to avoid any suggestion of connection with such a fanatical scheme. Olinger was exiled from Altona in 1705, and died ten years later in Copenhagen.

A year after Olinger's forced departure from Altona, the notorious Buttlar group arrived as refugees from Wetzlar. Leaders of the group were Eva van Buttlar and her physician husband, Johann Georg Appenfeller, sometimes called Leander. In Altona the couple preferred to be known as Dr. Brachfeld and wife. Eva claimed she had been chosen to bring forth the new Messiah. Members of the clan indulged

³⁵Wichmann, Loc. Cit.

in sexual orgies and actively searched for and seduced new members. In due time the police secretly forced the group to leave the area. Some settled in Kiel but others found their way back to Altona. Those who were allowed to remain appeared content to live quiet and orderly lives. Even Dr. Brachfeld finally achieved a good reputation. After his death on March 28, 1712, Eva and her current companion Seb. Ichtershausen joined the Lutheran Church and made several respectable connections through marriage. Eva Buttlar died April 27, 1721, and was quietly buried by her husband, Dr. Brachfeld, among the Separatists in the community cemetery in Altona.

Thanks be to God, the aged Gerhard Roosen died 14 months before the fire of 1713, and never witnessed the destruction of the chapel he had helped build. In the year 1708, at the age of 97, Gerhard performed a baptism and celebrated the Last Supper a final time. When his 98th birthday arrived, he presented the Church Council with a lengthy manuscript explaining why it is necessary to fear God. In this way man might be compelled to contribute to the peace and growth of the community. Gerhard dictated this treatise because his eyes had grown too weak for him to read his own writing. Gerhard Roosen remained a pillar of the church to the very end. In his will, dated 1708, he bequeathed 5,000 marks to the community. Of this sum 2,000 marks were to be paid in cash and the balance was to be invested in a mortgage certificate that could not be redeemed. An interest of 3.5 per cent on the 3,000-mark certificate was to be paid semi-annually to Hans Harmens, amounting to 52 marks and 8 pfennigs, as long as he remained a preacher. The Mennonite Community still holds this certificate.

Gerhard Roosen also had a warm spot in his heart for his fellow citizens who did not choose to accept the Mennonite way of life. To demonstrate this affection, he donated a knob for the steeple of the great Michaelis Church. This ornament was attached

August 5, 1668. In his will of June 16, 1711, Gerhard bequeathed 400 marks to the needy existing in plague centers, 300 marks to the paupers of Michaelis Church, 200 marks to the poor living in inns, and 100 marks to the destitute in work houses and poor houses. For the enjoyment and edification of individual members of his own community, in 1702 Gerhard had written the booklet Accusations and Innocence of the Evangelical Taufgesinnten Christians, Known as Mennonites. This publication refuted claims that the peace-loving Taufgesinnten were involved with Anabaptists who participated in the Münster rebellion. During that same year Gerhard gave an inspirational sermon based on blessed Mennonite doctrines. His remarks, together with 148 pertinent questions and answers, were subsequently published and ran through three editions. An abstract, including 35 questions and answers about the Christian ordinance of baptism, still exists and was used as a catechism by many Mennonite communities in Southern Germany up to the present [nineteenth] century. Gerhard Roosen was the eldest son of the first Roosen to come to Altona. He loved his brethren in the faith and was capable, prudent, and devout. Because of qualities such as these, he remained a stalwart member of the community throughout his life.

Similar comments are appropriate for the youngest son of the first van der Smissen to settle among us. From the family chronicle, printed in Danzig in 1875, we learn Hinrich van der Smissen was born at Glückstadt on January 24, 1662. When his parents moved the family to Altona in 1677, Gysbert van der Smissen apprenticed his son Hinrich to Jacob Kops, a Mennonite merchant in Hamburg. Hinrich was one of nine children, and when the day arrived that his father could no longer provide for him, this indomitable young man went to sea on a Greenland sailing vessel. When his ship was wrecked, Hinrich found temporary employment as a school teacher in Norway. Sometime later he worked his way back to Altona and

opened a bakery in a cellar at the corner of Elbe Street and Fishmarket. This same bakery was still in operation in the middle of the nineteenth century. Hinrich was ambitious, industrious, and dependable. Long before other tradesmen were up and about, Hinrich could be found on the docks selling bread to men on the ships. Many of his orders came from neutral Danish ships carrying cargo to Spain during the frequent Spanish wars. Through practices such as these, Hinrich established an excellent reputation both locally and as far away as Holland. Not content to sit back and reap the rewards of his labor, Hinrich continued active participation in his business long after he had acquired a modest fortune. When success of the bakery was assured, Hinrich invested in Greenland shipping. He selected a relative from Glückstadt by the name of Jan Elias Münster for a partner in this new venture. Jan's parents were in Glückstadt, but his grandparents lived in Wilster marsh.³⁶ Although the company faced strong opposition from older Greenland firms, Hinrich van der Smissen was a gifted entrepreneur capable of dealing with the most hostile Hamburg authorities and ship owners. The partners bought a ship and built warehouses on the banks of the Elbe River in Altona where property was cheaper than in Hamburg. These warehouses were eventually destroyed by a volley of more than 100 cannon balls fired by the Danes. Hinrich van der Smissen was an astute businessman who possessed the ability to recoup his fortune after two disastrous fires, with enough surplus to donate to the war tax. He also lent funds to city officials for their share of the assessment.

Perhaps the most important contribution made by Hinrich van der Smissen was his purchase of wasteland in 1706. This neglected

³⁶ Jan Münster's parents were Elias Jansen Münster and Syken, daughter of Berend and Fyken Overhold (1556-1655 and 1597-1652) who lived by Dorsten and Wesel in Westfalen. Jan's grandparents were Hans and Gesche Münster (1588-1626 and 1596-1656).

property consisted primarily of small hills and dales lying between the present towns of Sandberg and Rainville, but also included all the south side of the Palmaille up to Elbe Street. Hinrich had part of this land planted in trees for the pleasure and enjoyment of the public. Houses were built on a second portion, and the third was intended for land speculation. After the disastrous fire of 1713, Hinrich was appointed to the Altona building committee. As a member of this planning body, he set an example by providing housing for the craftsmen and handworkers. These humanitarian efforts contributed greatly toward Altona's economic recovery. Hinrich van der Smissen died July 1, 1737, at the age of 75. Through his last will and testament our community inherited 5,000 thaler. Because this man proved of inestimable value to his people at a crucial time in the history of the community, it is surprising he never achieved the rank of deacon. Jan Elias Münster, on the other hand, became a deacon in 1697 and retained this office until his death in 1716.

While the Mennonite Community faced almost insurmountable difficulties during this period, fellow believers in Southern Germany and Switzerland experienced afflictions even more severe. Collections were made in the Netherlands for our oppressed brethren in the Pfalz [Palatinate] during the years 1674 and 1678. Because of the scarcity of records, we do not know whether our community sent contributions or not. In 1689, troops of King Louis XIV of France laid waste the Pfalz. Burning village after village as they went, the French forces created a virtual desert between Germany and France. In the following year, 240 of 400 Mennonite families living in this region lost their homes and possessions. These destitute refugees escaped to little islands in the middle of the Rhine River where they built crude shelters of straw and twigs to protect themselves from the bitter winter weather. They survived until spring by eating frogs, snakes, and other small creatures sharing their island sanctuary.

In 1689, members of the Pfalz Community requested assistance from Altona. This message was communicated through preachers and deacons of the United Mennonite Community in Amsterdam.³⁷ We do not know if a response was made to the plea. However, it would be difficult to believe our community would refuse the request.

We are certain Altona and Hamburg Mennonites aided the Täufers in Switzerland in 1711. Such assistance called for great sacrifice as this was the time of the war between Denmark and Sweden when our community was assessed a crippling war tax. The Täufers had been bitterly suppressed for almost 200 years in Switzerland, and no change appeared in sight as the eighteenth century began. While penalties were severe in the canton of Zurich, the treatment of Täufers in the canton of Bern was horribly cruel. Over and above the lesser persecutions, members of this sect were whipped or killed. In many instances men were condemned to serve life sentences in the galleys. Täufer men and women who married outside their faith were forceably separated. Throughout all these afflictions, our brethren remained strong in their faith. In 1709, Taufgesinnten in Holland and Friesland appealed to the States-General of the Netherlands to intercede with the Swiss Government on behalf of the abused Täufers. An official communication was promptly dispatched which included a report of the excellent conduct of the Taufgesinnten and an assurance the Täufers would also prove good citizens if a tolerant attitude could be adopted by the Swiss. No appreciable change on the part of the authorities was noted, however, and approximately 100 families announced their intention to leave their homeland. With the assistance of the ambassador from the Netherlands, who was in residence in Switzerland, 450 emigrants reached the shores of the

³⁷ A copy of this letter is held in the archives of the Amsterdam Community, Section A, 1062. Dr. de Hoop Scheffer generously donated a transcript to our archives.

Netherlands in five great ships. These refugees were warmly welcomed by their fellow believers in the provinces of Groningen, Overyssel, and Friesland. The cost for transporting the Swiss Täufers was largely financed by communities of Taufgesinnten in the Netherlands. However, our own congregation raised 1,470 florins toward the debt. This was a significant achievement when one considers this amount was over and above the war tax levied against the Altona congregation in 1711. The contribution for the Täufers was forwarded to the Emigration Committee of the Amsterdam Sun Community in two installments. An inquiry filed in our archives concerning the second payment was dated April 12, 1712. The reply, with its accompanying donation, carries a date of April 26, 1712. This latter document, held in the Amsterdam Community Archives, was signed by the preacher Jan de Lanoy and deacons Jan Beets and Ernst Goverts, the son of P. Goverts.³⁸

In 1711, the year of emigration, King Friedrich I of Prussia offered part of his estate as a sanctuary for the Swiss refugees. This invitation was presented by the monarch's representatives in Hamburg, and deputies were sent by Swiss Mennonites to investigate conditions in Prussia. Their findings were not favorable and they recommended the Täufers settle on tracts of land rented for them in the Netherlands. Our community considered this an unfortunate decision.

The foregoing accounts aptly illustrate the generosity and sacrifice practiced by early Mennonites. These noble members of our faith were ever willing to share what little they had with those whom they considered more sorely afflicted. It is not known if aid was extended to their brethren in Prussia and Poland in 1713, the

³⁸ A copy of this document from Section A, 1155, was graciously supplied by Dr. de Hoop Scheffer.

year of the tragic burning of Altona by Swedish troops. Two-hundred families near Danzig faced death from hunger that year. Because their Mennonite neighbors were unable to cope with the crisis, an urgent call for help was sent to communities in the Netherlands. If our congregation did not participate in relief contributions, it can be assumed our sister communities were well-informed about the destruction in Altona and preferred not to ask for donations. From what we know of the history of the Danzig and Altona-Hamburg Communities, we can conclude the two were closely affiliated. Had it not been for the catastrophic fire, it is certain our community would have been the first to respond to Danzig.

So ends the history of the founding fathers of the early Mennonite Community in Altona and Hamburg. Our congregation endured countless tests, but they were not subjected to the inhuman persecutions inflicted upon religious dissenters in Switzerland and the Netherlands. Throughout a century and a half of wars, persecution, suppression, exile, and intense physical hardships, the Lord remained at the side of His people to guide and comfort those who would follow in His footsteps.





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